

Land, Community, and the State in the North Caucasus: Kabardino-Balkaria, 1763-1991

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The Caucasus mountain region in southern Russia has witnessed many of post-Soviet Eurasia's most violent inter-communal conflicts. From Abkhazia to Chechnya, the region fractured ferociously and neighboring communities took up arms against each other in the name of ethnicity and religion. In the midst of some of the worst conflict in Europe since 1945, the semiautonomous, multiethnic Kabardino-Balkar Republic in the North Caucasus remained a relative oasis of peace. This is not to say there were no tensions—there is no love lost between Kabardians, Balkars, and Russians, Kabardino-Balkaria's principal communities. But, why did these communities, despite the agitation of ethno-political entrepreneurs, not resort to force to solve their grievances, while many neighboring ones did? What institutions and practices have facilitated this peace? What role have state officials and state structures played in, on the one hand, producing inter-communal conflict, and, on the other hand, mediating and defusing such conflict? And why has land played such a crucial role in inter-communal relations in the region over the *longue durée*? More than enhancing our knowledge of a poorly-understood yet strategically important region, the questions I ask of Kabardino-Balkaria are windows on larger issues of enduring global relevance. What processes affect peace and stability in regions of ethno-confessional diversity? What role do states play in forging and manipulating ethnic, national, and religious affiliations? What are the dynamics of

governance in multiethnic and multiconfessional states? When and why do group identity categories, such as ethnicity and religion, matter?

This dissertation explores the themes of inter- and intra-communal relations, the expansion and evolution of imperial rule and governance, and the causes of peace and violence. I explore these themes particularly through the socioeconomic relations that developed around land use and ownership in central Caucasia, a region of extraordinary ethno-confessional and social diversity. In order to explore the deep roots of contemporary issues of governance, inter-communal relations, nationalism, and conflict in the Caucasus region, this study examines these issues over the *longue durée*, from the extension of Russian rule in the late eighteenth century through the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This periodization of over two centuries allows for a comparative exploration of these themes over different regimes: the pre-colonial Kabardian princely confederation, the tsarist state, the Soviet Union, and post-Soviet Russia.

My dissertation offers three broad conclusions to these questions. First, it argues that peace has prevailed in Kabardino-Balkaria because Kabardians, Balkars and Russians were interdependent stakeholders in a system of inter-communal relations, each occupying their own economic niche. Each group benefited from this system and had a stake in its preservation. Second, my research shows that the Kabardian majority has worked to ensure the continued inclusion of ethnic minorities in this system. Third, I demonstrate that imperial conquest and governance had both destructive and creative effects on inter-communal relations, by weakening some relationships, strengthening others, and, through colonization and resettlement, creating new ones. Finally, I argue

that the category of ethnicity had little intrinsic importance on an everyday level for the diverse peoples of this region. Indeed, for much of the period examined in this study, class or estate categories and confessional affiliations usually had far greater meaning in society than ethnic or national ones. But ethnic and national categories could become important political tools and, often, catalysts for conflict in the hands of elites of various stripes.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents for their love and encouragement.

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Introduction

Among the Lenin, Stalin, and Ivan the Terrible impersonators attracting the attention of tourists around Red Square during the cold autumn of 2010 was a group of white-bearded mountaineers clad in the mangy, thick wool burkas and hats (*papakhi*) traditionally worn by shepherds of the Caucasus highlands. Upon closer examination, it became clear that these striking men, straight out of a Tolstoy short story or Lermontov poem, were not encamped on Manezh Square to earn a living, at least not directly. Rather, these were real mountaineers, carrying out a hunger strike in the heart of Russian power, in order to bring attention to their community's real economic problems. They were Balkars, a national minority indigenous to the mountains of the semi-autonomous Kabardino-Balkar Republic in the center of Russia's volatile, multi-ethnic North Caucasus region. And they were conducting a hunger strike in protest of recent land reforms that they felt deprived them of historically Balkar pasture land vital to their cattle-breeding economy.¹ While most news reports and sound bites on the North Caucasus focus on recent problems of Islamic radicalism, terrorism, and national separatism, the Balkars' protest brought attention to a much older problem: the region's most enduring source of conflict and

¹ The independent Caucasus on-line news portal Caucasian Knot (Kavkazskii Uzel) covered the Balkar protests closely. See for example, Luiza Orazueva, *Uchastniki aktsii protesta balkartsev v Moskve vstretiatsia s chlenami obshchestvennoi palaty RF*, <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/178709> (December 21, 2010).

tension—land—and more specifically, competition over the scarce land resources of this densely populated mountain region.

In the 1990s, Dzhokhar Dudaev, the late President of the separatist Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, called Kabardino-Balkaria, “the sleeping beauty of the Caucasus.”² Dudaev predicted that if the North Caucasus region’s nationalist-cum-Islamist insurgency spread to Kabardino-Balkaria, Russia’s rule over its restive north Caucasian borderland could be effectively challenged. The belief was, as goes Kabardino-Balkaria, so goes the rest of the North Caucasus. Despite tensions between Kabardians and Balkars, and, since 2005, a low-level Islamist insurgency having very little to do with Kabardino-Balkar relations, the “sleeping beauty” never awoke. Everyday relations among Kabardians, Balkars, and Russians remain generally peaceful; the ability of ethno-political entrepreneurs to mobilize their co-ethnics has remained relatively weak since the de-escalation of tensions in the mid-1990s; and Kabardino-Balkaria remains tightly under Moscow’s control.

I had arrived in Moscow that autumn of 2010 to conduct research on the effects of Soviet nationality policies on interethnic relations and national identities in Kabardino-Balkaria. I wanted to understand why this republic, despite its tensions, had witnessed relative peace during the roughly two decades since the collapse of the Soviet Union, a period marked by conflict, usually framed in ethnic terms, throughout much of the Caucasus region. Though I suspected that land relations would be a part of my study, my serendipitous encounter with the Balkar demonstrators near Red Square led me to

² K.I. Kazenin, *Tikhie konflikty na Severnom Kavkaze: Adygeia, Kabardino-Balkariia, Karachaevo-Cherkesiia*. (Moscow: Regnum, 2009), 58.

hypothesize that questions of access to land would be *the* key to understanding inter-communal relations and state policies in the region. Indeed, as I approached the Soviet period chronologically and began examining archival materials on the Civil War years and the early Soviet period, land disputes, within and among nascent national communities, stood out as the most important social and political phenomena in the central Caucasus. My search for the reasons for the intense conflict and ethno-national mobilization around the land question in the early 1920s and today took me steadily farther back in time. I realized that to identify the structures and patterns of governance and political and socio-economic interaction in the region during the Soviet years, it would be necessary to understand central Caucasian society on the eve of the Russian conquest and how it changed and adapted to Russian rule over the *longue durée*.



Figure 1: Balkar demonstrators on Manezh Square, Moscow, autumn 2010. *Source: Balkariia* No. 2 (35) (December 2010): 1.

Themes and Arguments

This dissertation explores three primary themes: inter- and intra-communal relations, the expansion and evolution of imperial rule and governance, and the causes of peace and violence. I examine these topics particularly through the socioeconomic relations that developed around land use and ownership in the central Caucasus, a region of extraordinary ethno-confessional and social diversity. In order to explore the deep roots of contemporary issues of governance, inter-communal relations, nationalism, and conflict in the Caucasus region, this study analyzes these issues over two centuries, from the extension of Russian rule in the late eighteenth century through the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This periodization allows for a comparative exploration of these themes over different regimes: the pre-colonial Kabardian princely confederation, the tsarist state, the Soviet Union, and post-Soviet Russia.

First, this study finds that the ultimately peaceful relationship between Kabardians and Balkars has its roots in the symbiotic, though unequal, system of inter-communal relations that existed in the central Caucasus prior to the Russian conquest in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries and that continued in evolving and modified forms through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This symbiosis was based on each community occupying complimentary ecological niches. From the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, the Circassian princely confederation of Kabarda, controlling the vital arable farmland and seasonal pastures in the plains, was one of the most powerful states in the North Caucasus. Elites from neighboring transhumant mountaineer (*gortsy*) communities—today's Balkars, Karachai, Ossetians and Ingush—

collected tribute from their villagers and paid part of it to Kabardian princes to obtain for their community the right to graze cattle on Kabarda's lowland fiefdoms in the autumn and spring. Moreover, given the limitations of mountain terrace farming, mountaineers depended on grain from Kabarda for their survival. For their part, Kabardians relied on their mountaineer neighbors for animal products (regionally, Balkars historically kept the greatest amount of sheep and cattle per capita), candles, and refuge during invasions from external enemies.³

Horizontal class ties and confessional identities, the latter transcending class and community, were the social glue that held this symbiosis together. In particular, the elite princely and noble families of the central Caucasus, though culturally and linguistically diverse, were tied together through intermarriage and fictive kinship. These familial ties between Kabardian and mountaineer elites ensured the stability of the region's feudal social structure and provided vital socioeconomic benefits to the families involved. Even where familial ties were absent, the tributary relationship between mountaineer nobleman and Kabardian prince reinforced the status of both members within their own communities. When this system of inter-communal relations came under attack from Orthodox Russia, the mountaineers' and Kabardians' common adherence to Sunni Islam became another important link that bound these different communities together. Horizontal ties among the region's elites, though undergoing dramatic changes under tsarist rule, lasted through 1917.

³ On the Kabardino-Balkar symbiosis see M.I. Barazbiev, *Etnokul'turnye sviazy balkartsev i karachaevtsev s narodami Kavkaza* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 2000), 5-35.

During the tsarist period class or estate categories and confessional affiliations usually had far greater meaning in society than ethnic or national ones. While the tsarist state sometimes identified loyal groups and allocated rights and responsibilities on the basis of ethnic categories, it more often determined these questions according to confessional group, estate status, or civil-rank.⁴ After 1917, the Bolsheviks' class warfare combined with a thorough-going institutionalization and territorialialization of ethnicity gave ethnic categories unprecedented meaning in society and ended the cross-communal ties among the region's traditional elites. In deporting the Balkars and seven other nationalities during World War Two on charges of collective treason, Stalin's genocidal policies paradoxically consolidated the sense of ethnic consciousness among these communities. After 1945, the meaning of ethnicity in the North Caucasus varied by community. The communities that the Soviet state deemed disloyal on the basis of their ascribed ethnicity suffered thirteen years of exile under brutal conditions and, for many, decades of discrimination after their return to the North Caucasus in the late-1950s. By contrast, other communities whose ascribed ethnicity did not carry such negative consequences and connotations enjoyed heightened levels of social mobility especially within their ethnically defined administrative units.

Second, this dissertation demonstrates the impact of the imperial state on inter-communal relations and probes the nature of imperial governance in the central

⁴ Just as in Transcaucasia so in the central Caucasus, before the class warfare and nationalities policy of the Soviet period, "estate and class lines cut across allegiances to nationality for significant groups and even hindered the growth of ethnic nationalism." Ronald Grigor Suny, "Nationalism and Social Class in the Russian Revolution: The Cases of Baku and Tiflis," In *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1983), 242.

Caucasus. Russian rule had both destructive and creative effects on inter-communal relations. Russia's strategies and tactics for imperial conquest, control, and governance weakened some pre-existing relationships, strengthened others, and, through colonization and resettlement, created new ones. For most mountaineers, the emergence of a new focus of power in Russia ended the Kabarda-centered system of inter-communal relations. Kabardino-Balkar relations were an exception to this rule. As a result of demographic, ecological, and geopolitical factors, tsarist and Soviet rule solidified and intensified the interdependence between Kabardians and the mountaineer societies now known as Balkars.

Over the *longue durée*, tsarist and Soviet policies led to the replacement of the Kabarda-centered system of inter-communal relations in the central Caucasus with a smaller symbiotic system consisting of Kabardian, Balkar, and Cossack communities, which, by the turn of the twentieth century, also included Russian peasants and other settlers. In an effort to weaken Kabarda as part of Russia's assertion of control over the central Caucasus, tsarist officials attempted to end the Kabardian elites' tributary relations with neighboring mountaineer peoples. Officials provided economic incentives and military support to mountaineers in order to convince them to accept Russian subjecthood and reject Kabardian princely dominance. But as long as Kabardian elites controlled the land that the mountaineers needed for their survival, these divide-and-conquer tactics met with little success. Only with the destruction and depopulation of Kabarda at the hands of tsarist armies and especially the plague, and the redistribution of plains land to mountaineer communities, did most mountaineers' dependence on

Kabardian lands and resultant tributary relations with Kabardian princes end. However, given their proximity to the Kabardian heartland, the five mountaineer societies of Balkar, Khulam, Bezengi, Chegem, and Urusbii—today's Balkars—continued to depend on Kabardian plains land and summer mountain pastures long after Kabarda's cataclysmic decline.

Not seeing any strategic advantage in ending the symbiotic relationship between Kabardian and Balkar communities, tsarist and later Soviet administrators recognized Kabarda and the five mountaineer societies as an integrated economic system and pursued policies that further linked these communities together. Tsarist colonial policies created new types of relationships by promoting the settlement of the central Caucasus by Cossacks, Russian peasants, and other communities whom officials viewed as loyal to the state and more culturally and economically advanced than the region's native peoples. In most cases, migration to the central Caucasus from central Russia and Europe destabilized land and inter-communal relations. But, in contrast to most other parts of the region, the symbiotic system of relations in the remaining Kabardian lands adapted to the presence of these new communities because each community came to occupy their own mutually beneficial niche in the local ecology.

This study demonstrates how the tsarist and Soviet states created and used ethno-national categories as tools of imperial governance and social engineering in the central Caucasus. Based on the idea that "ethnically" homogeneous territories are easier to govern, the tsarist state in the late Imperial period introduced ethnicity as a category for

grouping communities and drawing administrative borders.⁵ This ethnicization of communities and territories transformed inter-communal relations in the central Caucasus. Population resettlements and administrative-territorial transformations based on state perceptions of ethnicity made interactions across different cultural-linguistic communal boundaries less frequent. In assigning the communities of the central Caucasus distinct ethnic status categories and dealing with them according to these statuses (in addition to the more important confessional and estate statuses), tsarist policies initiated ethnicity as a meaningful category in central Caucasian society. By the 1920s, the Civil War-era destruction of tsarist native elites (princes, nobles, large landowners) and the Soviet state's championing of the national principle—that the rights of Soviet peoples should be secured by granting them national autonomy within their own ethno-territorial units—paradoxically gave the category of ethnicity greater importance than social status in the lives of ordinary people in the central Caucasus and elsewhere in Eurasia.⁶ The social leveling of the Civil War years, culminating in the expropriation of noble landholdings and the equalization of land tenure within communities, meant that land inequalities shifted from class to communal lines (i.e. the greatest social tensions stemmed from plains communities, such as Kabardians and Cossacks, having more land than mountaineer communities, such as Balkars and Ossetians, rather than from individual members within these communities monopolizing land). In their bids to secure central state support, local elites of land-poor mountaineer communities in the central

⁵ Austin Jersild also makes this connection between ethnic homogenization and conceptions of governance. See *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountaineer peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 86.

⁶ On the Soviet promotion of ethnicity Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 414-52.

Caucasus tried to demonstrate to Moscow that, after the expropriation of noble landholdings, class fell neatly along communal—or, in the language understood by Soviet state, “national” lines.

In appealing to the Soviet state for support and instrumentalizing state-imposed identity categories to their advantage, both land-poor communities and those threatened by land-poor communities mastered the languages of nationality and class—they learned to “speak national” and to “speak Bolshevik.”⁷ By mastering these new languages, the peasants and shepherds who wrote petitions and often travelled thousands of miles to plead their cases at central party and state agencies in Moscow, embarked on a process of becoming *active* and *integrated* members of the Soviet state in addition to members of their newly promulgated nations. The instrumentalization of ethno-national and class categories during the formation of Soviet autonomies in the central Caucasus during the early-to-mid-1920s demonstrates what Francine Hirsch calls “double assimilation”: “assimilation...into nationality categories and, simultaneously, the assimilation of those nationally categorized groups into the Soviet state.”⁸

In the case of Kabardino-Balkaria, I argue that, in addition to fostering national and Soviet identifications, the Soviet state also created and promoted an intermediate

⁷ I borrow here from Theodora Dragostinova’s concepts of “national literacy” and “speaking national.” Dragostinova expands upon Alexei Yurchak’s concept, developed for the non-national Soviet context, of “ideological literacy”—“a technical skill of reproducing prefabricated ‘blocks’ of discourse”—for the nation-centered context (the nationalizing Bulgarian state). See Alexei Yurchak, “Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 3 (July 2003): 485–86; and Theodora Dragostinova, “Speaking National: Nationalizing the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900–1939,” *Slavic Review* 67, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 157–58. On “speaking Bolshevik,” see Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 198–237.

⁸ Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 14.

supranational, Kabardino-Balkar identity (even though not a stated or conscious goal at the outset). Created in 1922 as a means of ensuring the economic well-being and cooperation of Kabardian and Balkar communities and resolving land disputes between these communities, Kabardino-Balkaria became a unitary autonomous oblast for the newly promulgated Kabardian and Balkar nations. Rather than a federative relationship between two ethno-territorial units, the land and other natural resources of Kabardino-Balkaria became the common property of the people of Kabardino-Balkaria, rather than that of specific national communities. In official speeches and mass media, the term “Kabardino-Balkar people”—instead of the Kabardian and Balkar peoples—came into increasing use as the Soviet period progressed. Citizens of Kabardino-Balkaria would have an extra possible layer in their (ethnic, national, cultural and territorial) identities: their passport nationality (i.e. Kabardian, Balkar, Russian, etc.); Kabardino-Balkar identity; and a larger Soviet identity. These layers of identity were not mutually exclusive. As Eric Hobsbawm reminds us, “[m]en and women did not choose collective identification as they chose shoes, knowing they could only put on one pair at a time. They had, and still have, several attachments and loyalties simultaneously.”⁹ The collapse of the Soviet Union was a reflection of the failure of the latter of these three identity projects. In the early 1990s, Kabardian and Balkar separatism and irredentism seemed to indicate the failure of the Kabardino-Balkar project as well. Yet, the continued peaceful co-existence of Kabardians and Balkars in a common Republic today shows that this identity project/category has, for a variety of reasons, continued to offer coherence and

⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 123.

meaning both to state officials in their efforts to govern and to the people of the region in their daily lives.¹⁰

This study demonstrates how the state (be it tsarist, Soviet, post-Soviet), often at one and the same time but in pursuit of different goals, approached its empire in the Caucasus in three different ways depending on the context (to borrow Nicholas Breyfogle's typology): as a "bureaucrat-policeman," "landscaper," and "referee."¹¹ The meaning of and relationship among these three roles can be seen in what I term Russia's security dilemma in the North Caucasus: policies aimed at securing one part of the Caucasus often subverted imperial rule in other parts of the region and generally impeded other state objectives.¹² In behaving as a "bureaucrat-policeman state" concerned with "prevent[ing]...unrest, opposition and the disruption of order and stability in general," the tsarist and Soviet states in the North Caucasus could not adequately perform their other roles of "human landscaper"—a social engineer molding loyal and legible populations—and "referee"—an adjudicator of the "demands of subjects for mediation and mitigation" in order to "ensure their desired outcomes and forward their policy goals."¹³ For example, in deporting and resettling populations out of concerns for state security, the state created new inter-communal tensions that deteriorated security and impeded effective administration. Indeed, the legacies of Stalin-era deportations of entire

¹⁰ On the achieving and losing of Soviet identity along with an "ethnic" or "traditional" one, see, for example, Bruce Grant, *In the Soviet House of Culture: A Century of Perestroikas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

¹¹ Nicholas Breyfogle, "Enduring Imperium: Russia/Soviet Union/Eurasia as Multiethnic, Multiconfessional Space" *Ab Imperio*, no. 1 (2008): 61-74.

¹² This also speaks to Breyfogle's point that "activities, events, or policies in one region or one group often transformed other parts of the empire and other imperial minorities." See *ibid.*, 44.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 61-62, 68-69, 74. The concept of the "gardening state" comes from Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 13.

ethnicities from the North Caucasus, including the Balkars, fueled much of the inter-communal tension and ethno-nationalist mobilization that spread through the North Caucasus during the tumultuous early post-Soviet years.

This study also demonstrates the enduring importance of local elites in imperial governance and control and the multiethnic nature of tsarist and Soviet officialdom. As with most empires, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation depended upon native elites as sources of the essential local knowledge and socio-political legitimacy that the colonial state needed to police, govern, and transform the diverse communities residing within its imperium.¹⁴ Moreover, local elites became vital intermediaries between the imperial center and local communities. The role of native leaders underscores the ways in which the imperial state's relationship with its central Caucasian periphery was not simply one of a metropole dominating its periphery. The imperium often gave local Caucasian elites—particularly from favored communities like Georgians, Armenians, and Kabardians—pathways to upward mobility and powerful careers throughout the empire, including the imperial center. The imperium created webs of connections that facilitated a reciprocal relationship between center and periphery, with both Russians and non-Russians leaving their mark on each other and their regions. Finally, I demonstrate the ways in which both the tsarist and Soviet states used schooling and military service to engineer local elites who could embody and represent the empire locally.

¹⁴ Jane Burbank and Fredrick Cooper highlight the importance of imperial intermediaries in *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Third, and finally, this dissertation examines the causes of inter-communal peace and conflict in Kabardino-Balkaria and the North Caucasus more broadly. The Kabardino-Balkar symbiosis (based on economic, political, social, and familial ties) has meant that despite the subordinate position of Balkar communities vis-à-vis Kabardian communities, at critical points, the choice of most Balkars and Kabardians has been for compromise rather than violence. Moreover, the imperium, in its tsarist, Soviet and post-Soviet forms, played an important role as a mediator of conflict between Kabardian and Balkar communities and particularly between these communities' elites. Imperial administrators understood that, given the interdependent nature of land tenure among these communities, the state's goal of maintaining stability and order could best be achieved through the preservation of an integrated Kabardino-Balkar economic and administrative system. However beneficial close economic and political ties with Kabardians may have been for Balkars, over the *longue durée* this relationship has never been based on equality or parity of political and economic power. Over the two centuries examined in this study, rare moments of breakdown of peace and accord between Kabardians and Balkars were the results of the collapse of established state structures and centers of power. These moments of political change created windows of opportunity for Balkar elites to renegotiate and enhance their political, social, and economic positions, and the position of the people whom they claimed to represent, vis-à-vis their numerically larger Kabardian neighbors. These Balkar attempts to redefine their relations with their Kabardian neighbors, which nearly caused the political and economic separation of the two communities in the early 1920s and 1990s, led to elevated tensions and, sometimes,

conflict. These moments of tension abated relatively quickly because state officials, Kabardian elites, and ordinary villagers, realizing the potential for violence and economic disruption, came out in favor of compromise and the maintenance of the mutually beneficial system of economic and political relations.

As much as the imperial state acted as a mediator of conflicts and, after conquest, strove to preserve order and peace in its new lands, my study finds that state policies were often the cause of inter-communal conflict. I demonstrate that state policies aimed at achieving both state-security goals and ideological human-landscaping goals fueled inter-communal tensions. Population politics of resettlement and deportation disrupted historic land use and ownership regimes and, by shifting the demographic balance, disrupted inter-communal symbioses and led to violence in the North Caucasus. In contrast to communities in other parts of the Caucasus region, however, Kabardian and Balkar communities, given their demographic patterns, did *not* experience the same acute land pressures as a result of Russian colonization. Kabardian and Balkar communities were able to adapt their symbiotic economic system to include Cossacks, Russian peasants, and other colonial settler communities. In contrast, the imposition of national categories onto the peoples of the region and the delimitation of ethno-national borders demonstrates how the state's ideological projects exacerbated inter-communal conflicts. For example, from 1918 to 1926, the Bolsheviks' class warfare and introduction of the national principle led to the ethnicization of inter-communal conflict in the central Caucasus. The national principle and its instrumentalization by local elites exacerbated

tensions by turning feuds between villages over land allotments into conflicts between nations over their national territories.

This study also demonstrates the importance of modernization—urbanization, the expansion of schooling, the spread mass literacy, social mobility, and bureaucratization—of as a factor influencing inter-communal conflict over the twentieth century. I argue that one of the reasons why Kabardian and Balkar ethno-political entrepreneurs were unsuccessful in sustaining their mobilizations and convincing their co-ethnics to take up arms for the creation of separate territories was the relative absence of socio-economic inequalities between Kabardians and Balkars. With the notable exception of the period of Stalinist deportation and exile that the Balkars suffered though from 1944 to 1956, the state usually made little distinction between Kabardians and Balkars in the application of its modernizing policies. Moreover, after the Balkars' return from exile, the Kabardian-led local authorities (in addition to most Kabardian and Russian communities) endeavored to mitigate the negative socio-economic consequences of deportation and exile, particularly the resultant differences in modernization levels among Balkars and Kabardino-Balkaria's remaining population. The generally positive attitudes toward the Balkars' return on the part of the local population also facilitated the peaceful and ultimately successful re-integration of the region's Balkar minority. By the end of the Soviet period, Kabardian and Balkar communities demonstrated little difference in their levels of modernization. The case of Kabardino-Balkaria stands in marked contrast to other parts of the region where violence or at least seemingly intractable ethno-political tensions coincide with long histories social stratification along ethnic lines.

Methodology and Contributions

In analyzing inter-communal relations, state policies, and the causes of violence in the central Caucasus, I employ both group-level theories that focus on modernization and group psychology and more recent theories that focus on individual interactions and the role of elites in framing these interactions in ethnic terms. This dissertation expands the empirical basis for these social scientific theories and offers new insights on Soviet nationalities policy, the social history of the North Caucasus, and Eurasian borderlands.

At the heart of this study is an examination of inter-communal relations. Over the course of the more than 250 years of this study, there were important continuities and changes in how communities defined themselves and how communities were defined by state powers (and by neighboring communities). Communal identity might be defined (both sequentially and simultaneously) by social status/class, economic lifeways, geographic location, religion, culture group, and ethnicity. Of these, social status and geographic location were perhaps the more consistent markers of communal identities. However, ethnicity (and later nationality) came to be an ever more important defining force in intercommunal relations from the mid-nineteenth century on and especially during the Soviet twentieth century.

Drawing on the classic work of Richard Schermerhorn, Fredrik Barth and Manning Nash, I view ethnicity as a category defined by cultural and symbolic features that mark boundaries of difference visible to members of the ethnicity and non-

members.¹⁵ Possible features that mark these boundaries include but are not limited to language or dialect, religion, tribal affiliation, kinship, way of life, and shared myths. These cultural boundaries are not static, they are fluid and they can change in response to social, demographic, economic and political processes. Traditionally, scholars, adding to the above definition a sense of “common interests” and “a consciousness of kind among members,” have employed, somewhat interchangeably, the concepts of “ethnic group,” “ethnic community,” and “*ethnie*.”¹⁶ However, I reject the internal homogeneity implied by such concepts and share Rogers Brubaker’s view that such concepts based on “groupness” mistakenly “treat ethnic groups, nations, and races as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed.” Traditional scholarship on ethnicity exhibits a “[t]endency to reify groups...as if they were internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes.”¹⁷ Therefore, unless dealing with the evocation of ethnicity by state officials and local elites and the consequences of such use of ethnic frameworks, I have tried to avoid the use of the term ethnicity when describing everyday life and social relations.

This dissertation finds that, among the communities of the central Caucasus, a sense of groupness around ethnicity crystalized at specific moments, especially from the early-twentieth century on. This is not to say that ethnic or national consciousness did not

¹⁵ For these scholars’ classic conceptions of ethnicity see Richard Schermerhorn, *Comparative Ethnic Relations* (New York: Random House, 1970), 12-14; Manning Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 10-15; Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, 2nd ed. (Prospect Heights, Ill: Wavelnad Press, 1998), 10-19.

¹⁶ John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, introduction to *Ethnicity (Oxford Readers)* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996), 3-10.

¹⁷ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 8

exist among the peoples of the North Caucasus. Indeed, nationality policies and social-engineering projects in the twentieth century increased the importance of ethnicity as a category and lens through which Kabardians and Balkars experienced the world. But high levels of groupness, which Brubaker defines as “moments of intensely felt collective solidarity,”¹⁸ crystalized around ethnicity twice, both during periods of state collapse in the early 1920s and early 1990s as ethno-political entrepreneurs framed social and political conflicts in ethnic terms in order to improve their positions. This sense of groupness around ethnicity subsided as the Kabardian and Balkar ethno-political elites reached compromises because the costs of conflict for non-elites—violence and the disruption of symbiotic lifeways—outweighed the benefits and because Soviet and post-Soviet central leaders and officials favored the preservation of the Kabardino-Balkar system.

An individual-interactions approach to understanding “interethnic cooperation” provides perhaps the best explanation for the maintenance of the equilibrium of stable relations among Kabardians, Balkars and Russians. This approach, developed by James Fearon and David Laitin as an alternative to “the more standard group-level analyses” of “grievances and animosities,” posits that “decentralized, non-state institutional mechanisms...often arise to mitigate problems of opportunism [i.e. actions that would disrupt interethnic relations] in interactions between individuals from different ethnic groups.”¹⁹ In particular, Fearon and Laitin point to two types of informal mechanisms

¹⁸ Ibid., 12.

¹⁹ James Fearon and David Laitin, “Explaining Interethnic Cooperation,” *The American Political Science Review* 9, no. 4 (1996): 715.

that support ethnic cooperation: “spiral equilibrium” and “in-group policing.” In the spiral equilibrium, “each group...hold[s] all members of the other group liable for the actions of its individual members.”²⁰ According to Fearon and Laitin, “spiral equilibrium rests on a sort of interethnic deterrence—individuals cooperate in interethnic interactions for fear of losing future payoffs should they defect and cause a larger breakdown of intergroup relations.”²¹ In in-group policing, “the members of one group may simply ignore violations...by members of the other group, relying instead on the other group to identify and sanction the appropriate individual.”²² This study finds that in the Kabardino-Balkar case, on the level of individual interactions, the spiral equilibrium has been the most effective informal mechanism for ensuring cooperation between Kabardian and Balkar communities. The grave collective consequences of an individual violation of norms of inter-communal cooperation—economic collapse and violence—outweigh the benefits derived by the individual from acts of opportunism. In order for a spiral equilibrium to develop, inter-communal relations must be frequent, otherwise, “the threat of a breakdown of...relations is not compelling enough to induce individual members to cooperate.” The high frequency of interactions between Kabardians and Balkars explain why a spiral equilibrium developed in the Kabardino-Balkar case but not in some other cases in the North Caucasus, most notably the Chechen-Russian case.

In addition to these non-state mechanisms, my study finds that the state played an important role in both mitigating and fostering conflict. Fearon and Laitin’s model applies

²⁰ Ibid., 719.

²¹ Ibid., 722.

²² Ibid., 719.

to situations in which the state is weak or nonexistent, but they add that “the [f]urther development...of [their] approach would require fuller consideration of the state’s role in both cauterizing and fostering interethnic violence.”²³ They suggest viewing the state as “a player who will intervene only if violence reaches a certain level.”²⁴ I find that during the early 1920s and early 1990s, once the central state began to stabilize, officials were quick to intervene to end, contain, or preempt ethnicized violence in the region.

Most of the violence that I describe in this dissertation was, at least at the outset, inter- and intra-communal, rather than inter-ethnic, in nature. Drawing on studies of ethnicity and violence by David Laitin, Rogers Brubaker, James Fearon and Paul Brass, I argue that, in the 1920s and 1990s, ethno-political entrepreneurs ethnicized micro-level violence between villages over land and elite-level political disputes by framing them in ethnic terms in order to maintain, gain, or increase their power. When elites ethnically frame a violent incident that, at its roots, had little to do with ethnicity, the incident is often widely interpreted as interethnic violence. This *ex-post-facto* ethnicization of violence can often lead to a further escalation of violence, now on the basis of ethnicity rather than whatever the original incident had originally been about (land, cattle, money, family honor). Most importantly for ethno-political entrepreneurs, ethnically framed violence can produce a sense of groupness around the category of ethnicity.²⁵ Ethnicity, then, “is not the ultimate, irreducible source of violent conflict in such cases.” Rather, as

²³ Ibid., 731.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ For various iterates of this take on “ethnic” violence see Rogers Brubaker and David Laitin, “Ethnic and Nationalist Violence,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (1998): 444-45; Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*, 16-17; and James Fearon and David Laitin, “Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnicity,” *International Organization* 54, no. 4 (2000): 845-77; and Paul Brass, *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

Brubaker and Laitin argue, “the ‘ethnic’ quality of ethnic violence...emerges through after-the-fact interpretative claims.” The framing of conflict as ethnic “feed[s] back into the conflict in such a way as to generate (by furnishing advance legitimation for) future violence.”²⁶ Fearon and Laitin take this line of reasoning further and argue that violence is a key component—in addition to broad historical processes of economic modernization—of the social construction of ethnicity as a group identity category. They find that, when ethnically framed, “violence has the effect...of constructing group identities in more antagonistic and rigid ways.”²⁷ The violence that plagued relations between Kabardians and their neighbors in the first half of the 1920s clearly demonstrates this tendency of violence, when ethnically framed after the fact, to create ethnic conflict and foster as sense of groupness around ethnicity.

Despite the recent and ultimately productive move away from the “tendency to take discrete, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life...and units of social analysis”²⁸ toward more micro-level methodologies, I find that group-level methodologies still reveal important insights into ethnic processes—they provide essential context for understanding the crystallization of groupness around ethnicity and the causes of conflict. In this regard, I find that differences in levels of economic development and social mobility (modernization) across groups are indicative of higher levels conflict. From the late-imperial period, and then more intensely from the 1930s on, as modernization processes began to transform the societies of the North Caucasus,

²⁶ Brubaker and Laitin, 444.

²⁷ Fearon and Laitin, 846.

²⁸ Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 8.

Kabardians and Balkars generally experienced these processes in not dissimilar ways: as cultural minorities whom the modernizing empire. This relatively even modernization experienced by Kabardians and Balkars stands in contrast to other more conflict-prone parts of Caucasia like Chechnya. The Balkars' deportation and exile to Central Asia, a result of Stalinist xenophobia and ethnic cleansing, marks an exception to this similarity in experiences between Kabardians and Balkars. But with the Balkars' return in the late 1950s, the Kabardian and Russian communities of Kabardino-Balkaria, and the local leadership, were keen to integrate the Balkars back into the social fabric of the republic and reconstitute the historic symbiosis. Beginning with the work of Karl Deutsch in the mid-1950s and 1960s, numerous scholars of ethnicity have drawn positive correlations between uneven modernization ("social mobilization" in Deutsch's original iteration) and "ethnic conflict."²⁹ This dissertation finds that differences in modernization levels across groups helps to explain the broad context of conflict once it has become ethnicized. But, modernization theories do not explain the outbreak of inter-communal violence and its development into "ethnic conflict." These phenomena are best explained at the micro level by looking at everyday interactions and the behavior of ethno-political entrepreneurs.

Among Kabardians and Balkars, there was no clear dichotomization between Kabardians and Balkars based on perceived "advanced" or "backward" traits or a clear sense that one group had proved more capable of working within the colonial system than

²⁹ Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1966), 123-52; Ernest Gellner makes this connection in his classic *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) 53-62; See also Donald Horowitz's review of theories of ethnicity and modernization in *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 99-105.

the other. Based on Donald Horowitz's psychological theory of ethnic conflict, this lack of dichotomous positive and negative perceptions of Kabardians and Balkars in Kabardino-Balkaria also helps explain the relatively low incidence of conflict between the two communities. Donald Horowitz has criticized modernization theories of ethnic conflict for paying "insufficient attention to the conflict motives of non-elites, whose stake in the benefits being distributed is often tenuous at best" and because "modernization theory provides no convincing way to explain why so much ethnic conflict...has occurred in some of the least modernized areas of the world: [e.g. post-colonial states in Africa and Asia]."³⁰ Eschewing modernization theory, Horowitz focuses on group emotions and perceptions in colonial and post-colonial situations. He argues that the "envy, resentment, and fear [fueling ethnic conflict] is to be found, not in the ethnic distribution of opportunities and benefits *per se*, but in what this indicates about relative group capacities."³¹ Horowitz avers that stereotypes about "advanced" and "backwards" groups—developed because some groups fared better under colonialism and were able to benefit from the opportunities brought by the colonial administration, while others remained relatively marginalized—became sources of ethnic conflict. "Feelings of backwardness"—"to feel weak *vis-à-vis* advanced groups"—promoted by stereotypes (often introduced by the colonial power) that juxtapose groups based on their perceived capacities (e.g. lazy/industrious, ignorant/intelligent, traditional/progressive), came from

³⁰ Horowitz, 102-03.

³¹ Ibid., 102.

“the discovery that ethnic strangers had mastered the modern skills associated with the colonial ruler more completely than they themselves had.”³²

Employing modernist and constructivist approaches to the study of the nation, I emphasize how the policies of the modernizing tsarist and Soviet states and the discursive work of native intellectuals and political entrepreneurs helped create and re-imagine national communities in the central Caucasus.³³ In particular, I pinpoint the beginnings of nation-making processes in the late-imperial period. Beginning in about in the 1860s, the tsarist administrators divided upon the region into administrative units according to their perceptions of ethnic categories. Next, the administration made efforts to ethnically homogenize these new ethnically-defined administrative units. Finally, the late imperial period, and in some cases the preceding decades, witnessed the birth of national intelligentsias in the North Caucasus. While the major works on Soviet nationalities policy, such as those by Ronald Grigor Suny, Yuri Slezkine, Terry Martin and Francine Hirsch, emphasize how, among the smaller peoples of the empire, the Soviet state created national forms and categories almost *ex nihilo*,³⁴ this dissertation demonstrates essential continuities in state nationalities policies and nation-making processes across the tsarist-Soviet divide. To be sure, ethnophile Soviet policymakers would take the ethnicizing

³² Ibid., 166-67

³³ For the pioneering modernist and constructivist works on nations and nationalism are Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*; and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* Revised edition (London: Verso, 1991).

³⁴ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1993), 87-106; Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment”; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

tendencies of their tsarist predecessors to new heights and do so for different ideological goals.

This dissertation finds continuity in nationalities policy throughout the Soviet period. During the more than 70 years of its existence, the Soviet state applied policies of nativization (*korenizatsiia*)—the use of titular languages in administration and education in national republics and regions; the creation of national intelligentsias; and the promotion of members of titular indigenous nationalities to positions at all levels in industry, administration, and the Party. The periodic elevation in importance of statist and security policies that were seemingly antithetical to the goals of nativization—from the promotion of Russian-language schooling to ethnic cleansing—mask the ways in which nativization policies continued. In contrast to the major studies of Soviet nationality policies that argue that the Soviet state stopped giving nativization high priority after the mid-1930s, my research confirms Peter Blitstein’s finding that the late-Stalin years, from about 1948 to 1953, was a time of renewed emphasis on nativization.³⁵ The promotion of nativization policies during the post-war, late-Stalin years had significant impacts on ethnic processes throughout the remainder of the Soviet period, especially during the Soviet collapse. Ultimately, by taking a longer periodization than most other scholars of Soviet nationalities policies, this dissertation identifies important continuities across the traditional historiographical divides of 1917 and 1945. Going beyond Blitstein’s periodization (1936-1953) and looking at nationalities policy after Stalin’s death, I show that nativization continued, though often being overshadowed by opposing statist

³⁵ Peter Blitstein, “Stalin’s Nations: Soviet Nationality Policy between Planning and Primordialism, 1936-1953” (Ph.d. diss., University of California-Berkeley, 1999).

policies, throughout the Soviet era. Indeed, the successful socio-economic reintegration of the Balkars in the late 1950s and early 1960s was, in large measure, a product of a robust Balkarization campaign.

By examining the competing concerns of the officials, agencies, and local actors involved in the delimitation of national borders, this study demonstrates that the Soviet division of Russia's colonial peripheries into a patchwork of autonomous regions and republics was *not* part of a colonial strategy to keep these regions weak and divided. While recent work has debunked this cold-war "divide-and-rule" view in regard to Central Asia,³⁶ Soviet border-making in Caucasia has received little attention and observers mistakenly view current territorial disputes here as exclusively the products of Soviet strategies for control.³⁷ In addition to the competing concerns of different state organs, I also demonstrate how the everyday concerns of villagers over questions of land and their efforts to make these concerns known to state officials impacted the process of border delimitation.

This dissertation emphasizes the fluidity of interactions across frontiers and borders, particularly during the tsarist period, and the dynamic social processes of the empire. Russia's long relationship with the North Caucasus, and the relations among the

³⁶ For examples of this reconceptualization of border-making in Soviet Central Asia see, Arne Haugen, *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Francine Hirsch, "Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities," *Russian Review*, 59 (2000): 201-25.

³⁷ Recent articles by me and Arsene Saparov have begun to correct this lack of scholarship on border-making in Caucasia. See Saparov's "From Conflict to Autonomy: The Making of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region 1918-1922," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62, no. 1 (2010): 99-123 and "Why Autonomy? The Making of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region 1918-1925," *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 2 (2012): 281-323; and Ian T. Lanzillotti, "From Princely Fiefdoms to Soviet Nations: Interethnic Border Conflicts in the North Caucasus and the Village of Lesken," *Central Asian Survey* 31, no. 2 (2012): 209-27.

different Caucasian communities, has more frequently been one of cooperation, coexistence, and interethnic mixing. By contrast, much of the western scholarship on the North Caucasus focuses on conquest and resistance to Russian rule and its tragic consequences, with the Sufi Sheikh Imam Shamil's long successful imamate in Chechnya and Dagestan and the recent Chechen Wars being the most prominent examples.³⁸ To be sure, the results of the many armed conflicts between North-Caucasian natives and the Russian state can explain much about the fate of the region's indigenous communities. But while the results of armed conflicts and deportations fuel the rhetoric of Caucasian ethno-national entrepreneurs, the history of resistance to Russian rule is just one side of the complex history of relations between the region's native peoples and the Russian state.³⁹ Instead of looking at the military and political history of the relationship between the peoples of the North Caucasus and Russia, recently historians have fruitfully explored the complex social, economic and cultural interrelations between Russians and other

³⁸ For examples of work on colonial conquest and anti-colonial resistance in the North Caucasus see John Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908); Lesley Blanch, *The Sabres of Paradise* (London: John Murray, 1960); Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar. Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan* (London: F. Cass, 1994); idem, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear: Three Centuries of Chechen Defiance of Russian Rule* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006); Robert Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800-2000: A Deadly Embrace* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001); Anna Zelkina, *In Quest for God and Freedom: Sufi Responses to the Russian Advance in the North Caucasus* (London: Hurst, 2000); and Marie Bennigsen Broxup (ed.), *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance Toward the Muslim World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Thomas Sanders, Ernest Tucker and Gary Hamburg, *Russian-Muslim Confrontation in the Caucasus : Alternative Vision of the Conflict Between Imam Shamil and the Russians, 1830-1859* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2004). The Russian conquest of Circassia in the northwest Caucasus, and what many see as the resultant genocide, has also received relatively wide attention. See, for example, Paul Henze, *The North Caucasus: Russia's long struggle to subdue the Circassians* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1990); Walter Richmond, *The Circassian Genocide* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013); and idem, *The Northwest Caucasus: Past, Present, Future* (London: Routledge, 2008).

³⁹ For a survey of historiography on the North Caucasus and recent trends see Iu. Arapov et al., *Severnyi Kavkaz v sostave Rossiiskoi Imperii*. (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2007): 18-32.

settlers on the one hand and the region's peoples on the other.⁴⁰ With its emphasis on social history and inter-communal relations, the present dissertation builds on this recent scholarship, but, it avoids dichotomizing the relationship between “natives” and “settlers.” Rather, I demonstrate the webs of economic, social and political relations that linked together the communities of the central Caucasus and how the colonization of the region by Russians and other settlers affected relations between and among numerous different communities.

The modern ethno-territorial borders imposed on the map of the North Caucasus in the twentieth century have become discursive barriers to how we write about the region's history. While the weakness of western historiography on the North Caucasus is its disproportionate focus on conflict and resistance during the Caucasian Wars of the nineteenth century, the more voluminous Soviet and Russian historiography on the North Caucasus, with notable exceptions, anachronistically take modern administrative-territorial units as their units of analysis for periods when these formations did not exist. This regional or national-territorial approach is common throughout Eurasia. In the case of the North Caucasus, it has led to mono-ethnic histories of a multi-ethnic region and, thus, misrepresentations of social life in the region. As Aleksei Miller points out, the

⁴⁰For a sample of this western scholarship on the North Caucasus see Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*; Susan Layton, *Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Thomas Barrett, *At Edge of Empire: The Terek Cossacks and the North Caucasus Frontier, 1700-1860* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); Michael Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices: Loyalty and Betray in the Russian Conquest of the North Caucasus*. (Ithaca: Cornell university Press, 2011); Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). Charles King's concise survey of the history of the Caucasus, which focuses particularly on the period from the Russian conquest to the present, while including the standard political and military narratives, also incorporates cultural and social historical perspectives. See, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

major problem with national historical narratives such as those that dominate the historiography on the North Caucasus, is that they “combin[e the nation’s history] with the story of how this or that territory ‘rightfully’ belongs to it,” making them “candidly teleological, rooted in ideology, and poorly adapted to exposing the logic of the empire’s dynamic process, since these are treated as...merely the background and context for the development of the nation.”⁴¹ Even in cases where the administrative-territorial unit under study is multi-titular, for example Kabardino-Balkaria or Karachai-Cherkessia, historical studies give very limited information about the interactions of these titular ethnic communities and deal with them in separate sections, as if they lived in complete isolation from one another. These works provide even less information on interactions between the titular nationalities and communities outside the borders of the ethnically defined administrative unit.⁴²

Despite having “Kabardino-Balkaria” in its title, this dissertation, heeding Aleksei Miller’s calls for “a situational approach” to the study of Russia’s multiethnic empire,⁴³ attempts to take a web of relationships, one structured in part by space (e.g. mountains and plains), rather than a place or region, as its unit of analysis. The “situation” is Kabardians’ symbiotic, though socially unequal, relationship with their neighbors and the effect of state power on this relationship and on the transformation of the societies of the central Caucasus. This study’s situation changes according to “the empire’s dynamic

⁴¹ Alexei Miller, “Between Local and Inter-Imperial: Russian Imperial History in Search of Scope and Paradigm,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 10.

⁴² See, for example, the following high-school textbooks: T. Kh. Kumykov, *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarii* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1997) and V. Sh. Nakhushcheva *Narody Karachaevo-Cherkesii : istoriia i kul'tura* (Cherkessk: KChRIPKRO, 1998).

⁴³ Miller, “Between Local and Inter-Imperial”, 17-18.

processes.”⁴⁴ Kabardians are at the center of my situational analysis because this study begins by examining the Kabarda-centered system of inter-communal relations that covered most of the central Caucasus from roughly the sixteenth through late-eighteenth centuries. Beginning with the Kabarda-centered system is important because the legacies and remnants of this system continued to play a very important role in social life and politics in the central Caucasus throughout the roughly two centuries covered in this study. Over time, Kabarda—its elites and its land—ceased to play a determinative role in the lives of many of its neighboring communities. Accordingly, by the mid-1930s, the communities in the situation gradually diminish to include primarily those who resided within the borders of the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic: Kabardians, Balkars, and Russians. This is not to say that borders ended Kabardians’ relationships with cross-border communities. But, of the original participants in the land-based economic symbiosis, only the people we now know as Balkars remained inextricably linked with their Kabardian neighbors in their everyday lives through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Given that their zone of compact settlement was and remains surrounded by Kabardian villages, the lives of local Slavs (primarily Russians settlers and Cossacks) are also tied to their Kabardian neighbors.

People and Place

Over the more than two centuries covered in this dissertation a sense of cohesion and unity of purpose and action rarely existed among the North Caucasian peoples who are

⁴⁴ Ibid., 9.

now known and generally self-identify as Kabardians, Abaza, Balkars, Karachai, Ossetians, Ingush, and Chechens. Moreover, individuals did and do not usually use these ethnonyms when self-identifying in their native languages. For example, Kabardians refer to themselves in their native language (as they have for centuries) as *Adyga*, the same ethnonym used by the wider Circassian community. To the extent that Balkars had a common ethnonym before the creation of Balkar as an ethnic category in the early twentieth century it was *Taulu* (literally a mountaineer in their kipchak-turkic tongue). Despite often being anachronisms, I nevertheless often use these modern ethnonyms when referring to larger cultural-linguistic communities. I do so for the sake of continuity and specificity. Rather than refer to Balkars as *Taulula* until 1900 and Balkars thereafter or referring to Kabardians as simply *Adyga*, which does not differentiate them from the rest of the Circassian-speaking world, I use modern ethnonyms to indicate representatives of these cultural-linguistic categories. A sense of enduring or naturalized groupness should not automatically be read into these categories, however. Whenever possible, I differentiate social and territorial communities from within these larger ethno-cultural communities. For example, I always use some variant of “Kabardian princes and nobles” and not simply “Kabardians” when discussing Kabarda’s tributary relations with neighboring communities. Moreover, when discussing the mountaineer communities of the North Caucasus, whenever possible, I refer to a specific mountain society—the primary local political unit—rather than simply to a modern ethnonym. For example, when discussing Kabardino-Ossetian religious ties, I usually refer to Digora Ossetians, the linguistically Ossetian mountain society with the closest ties to Kabarda. Finally, when

discussing the tsarist state's policies toward Balkars, I use the phrase "the five mountaineer societies of Kabarda" or simply "the five mountaineer societies" because this is how the tsarist administration referred to the Balkars collectively.

The North Caucasus refers to the region, roughly the size of England and Wales combined, bordering the Greater Caucasus mountain range and the Georgian and Azeri lands in the south, the Black Sea to the west, and the Caspian Sea to the east. The region's northern limits are less precisely defined and have historically been more of a frontier than a natural border. In the modern period, the administrative borders of the North Caucasus have extended as far north as the city Rostov-on-Don and the surrounding steppe region. I do not employ such an expansive definition of the North Caucasus. For the purposes of this study, I use a geo-ecological definition of the North Caucasus based on its defining natural feature—mountains—and the peoples whose lives were affected it. The region extends as far north as the zones of settlement of peoples who interacted with the mountain zone. I therefore delimit the North Caucasus in the north by the beginning of the zone where nomadic-pastoral Kalmyk and Nogai steppe communities traditionally resided before the demographic transformation of the Steppe by Russian colonization.



Figure 2: Ethno-demographic map of the northwest and central Caucasus on the eve of tsarist conquest. *Source:* CircassianWorld.com



Figure 3: Contemporary Geographic and Political Map of the Caucasus Region. *Source:* The Caucasus Physical—Caucasus Maps, Mapsof.net, <http://mapsof.net/map/the-caucasus-physical>

The territorial extent of the present study is the central Caucasus—the region, roughly the size of the Netherlands, over which the princely confederation of Kabarda projected varying degrees of political, social and economic power between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. I use an adaptation of historian Rustam Begeulov’s definition of the central Caucasus—the Russian Federation’s Republics of Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, the western half of Karachai-Cherkessia (Karachai, Lesser-Karachai, Ust-Dzheguta, and Prikuban districts) and the southern-most portions of Stavropol Krai.⁴⁵ At its southern limits, the central Caucasus is situated roughly between Europe’s highest mountain, Mount Elbrus (18,510 feet) in the southwest and Mount Kazbek in the southeast (16,516 feet). Central Caucasia’s shortest side is its natural southern border along the Caucasus Range, which stretches about 130 miles between these two mountains. The central Caucasus is bounded by the right bank of the upper Kuban River in the west, the Kuma and Podkumok Rivers in the northwest, the Kura River in the north, the Terek in the northeast and east, and the Sunzha River in the east.

The present-day Kabardino-Balkar Republic is situated on 4,800 square miles toward the center of the central Caucasus region. Within this relatively small territory about half the size of New Jersey, Kabardino-Balkaria includes a diversity of ecological zones, which are a microcosm of those found in the central Caucasus generally. Moving southwest across the Republic, the Terek plains of Lesser Kabarda, in the northeast corner, are hot, humid and prone to drought. The fertile and naturally well-watered plains closer to the center of the Republic have a continental climate. Farther to the south and

⁴⁵ R. M. Begeulov, *Tsentral’nyi Kavkaz v XVII-pervoi chetverti XIX veka: ocherki etnopoliticheskoi istorii* (Karachaeensk: Karachaevo-Cherkesskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 2005), 7.

west, as the elevation begins to rise up to 5,250 feet above sea level, the foothill zone, composing sixteen percent of Kabardino-Balkaria's territory, is covered in lush forests and has a more moderate climate. Finally, the mountain zone, in the south and west, with an extreme continental climate, makes up just over half of Kabardino-Balkaria's territory. This mountain zone generally consists of two parts: (1) the subalpine and alpine mountain pastures and surrounding valleys and ridges, covered with tall grass on its rolling hills in the short summer season and barren and often snow-covered during the long winter season, extends from approximately 5,250 to 10,000 feet above sea level; and (2) the arctic zone (rising beyond 10,000 feet above sea level), with its rocky ridges, is mostly snow-covered year round.⁴⁶

The invasions of the Mongols and Tamerlane in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries wrought fundamental transformations upon the ethno-cultural, demographic, and political landscape of the North Caucasus, as they did throughout much of Eurasia. The major cultural-linguistic communities before the Mongols, such as those of the Cumans (Polovtsians) and Alans, either fled the North Caucasus or took refuge in its isolated mountain valleys with the collapse of their polities. The descendants of those who lived through the Mongol conquest, now mountain dwellers, became the progenitors (though not the only ones) of new cultural-linguistic communities—today's Karachai, Balkars, and Ossetians. Meanwhile, a new tribal confederation, that of the Adyga or Circassians, defined initially by its ability to withstand Mongol invasions, emerged in the far western end of Caucasia along the Black Sea coast. As the Golden Horde weakened in

⁴⁶ R.A. Buraev and L.Z. Emuzova, *Geografiia Kabardino-Balkarskoi Respubliki* (Nalchik: Kniga, 1998), 13-22.

the fifteenth century, legend has it that Inal, an Egyptian Mamluk ruler perhaps of proto-Circassian descent, fled Egypt and forged a confederation of several Circassian tribes. This new unity gave Circassia an expansionist impulse. Indeed, in the fifteenth century the Circassians migrated east, asserting control over lands east of the right-bank of the Kuban and, subsequently, the foothills and plains of the central Caucasus along the rivers Malka and Terek up to the latter's confluence with the Sunzha. According to oral tradition, Inal divided his patrimony among his four sons. The easternmost of these Circassian territories became known as Kabarda (*Kabardei*). This new princely state replaced the Golden Horde as the suzerain⁴⁷ of the surrounding mountaineer societies that relied on the flatlands to their north, now controlled by Kabarda, for their survival.⁴⁸

Numerous legends surround the origins of the name Kabarda. Some claim that Kabard was the son who received princely title to Inal's easternmost domains. Others aver that the term Kabarda comes from Kabard Tambiev, a high-noble (*tliakotlesh*) who broke away from the Bolotokov Circassian princes of the Black Sea coast, and founded his own princely state in the central Caucasus. Still others claim that the term Kabarda

⁴⁷ Recent historiography of Karachai and Balkar authors has questioned the appropriateness of viewing Kabardian-mountaineer relations in terms of a "suzerain-vassal" dichotomy. In my view, these terms, while not perfect, most closely approximate the relationship between Kabarda and its neighbors. See for example, Z. B. Kipkeeva, *Severnyi Kavkaz v Rossiiskoi imperii: narody, migratsii, territorii* (Stavropol: Stavropol'skii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2008); Begeulov; and R. T. Khatuev, "Karachai i Balkariia do vtoroi poloviny XIX v.: vlast' i obshchestvo." In *Karachaevtsy i Balkartsy: etnografiia, istoriia, arkhologiiia*, S. A. Arutiunov ed. (Moscow: Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk institute etnologii i antropologii, 1999).

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the political and ethnic transformations taking place in the North Caucasus between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries and, particularly, the emergence of Kabarda, see V. V. Gudakov, *Severo-Zapadnyi Kavkaz v sisteme mezhetnicheskikh otnoshenii s drevneishikh vremen do 60-kh godov XIX veka* (Sankt Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo S.-Peterburgskogo Universiteta, 2007), 112-222; Unezhev, 60-72; Zh. V. Kagazezhev, "Etnoterritorial'naia separatsiia adygov v pozdnem srednevekov'e," *Voprosy Istorii* no. 7, July 2011: 154-58; and S. K. Bushuev, *Istoriia Severo-Osetinskoi ASSR*. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1959), 86-87.

comes from the Georgian for “on the other side,” a reference to Kabarda’s position vis-à-vis Georgia and the Caucasus mountains. Finally, others claim that the term Kabarda comes from the name of a river or a place in the Crimea, from whence, according to the various iterations of this legend, the Kabardian people came. This same legend, which originates from Kabardian princes, claims that the Kabardians arrived in the Crimea from Arabia.⁴⁹ Whatever the origins of the name, it is clear, however, that among Circassians, the territory known as *Kabardei* was originally limited to the area controlled by the Kazy Princes (*Kazyeva Kabarda* in Russian). Beginning in the sixteenth century, Russian sources called this principedom, which extended from at least the upper Malka River in the west up to the Terek in the east, “Greater Kabarda,” a toponym that has been in continuous use, either officially or colloquially, ever since. The other smaller Circassian principedoms to the east which were loosely confederated with Greater Kabarda were *Dzhylakhstanei* (controlled by the Akhlov and Mudarov princes) and *Talostanei* (controlled by the Sholokhov princes). By the late sixteenth century foreign sources began referring to this territory as Lesser Kabarda. At present, Kabardians refer to Lesser Kabarda as *Dzhylakhstanei*, after the larger of its two historic principedoms.⁵⁰

Kabarda was usually rife with internecine strife throughout its existence. Kabarda's ruling princely families often came to loggerheads over regional dominance and competing territorial claims. The practice of blood vengeance meant that feuds between princely families lasted generations. In the late-sixteenth century these conflicts

⁴⁹ Iurii Asanov, *Otkuda est' poshla Zemlia Kabardinskaia. Chto oznachaet nazvanie Kabarda, i kto v nei pervym kniazhil?* (Nalchik: Pechatnyi dvor, 2012), 5-22.

⁵⁰ Unezhev, 66-68.

led to a near-permanent political split, yielding Greater Kabarda in the west and Lesser Kabarda in the east. The Terek River south of its confluence with the Malka was the natural border between the two Kabardas.⁵¹ As Kabarda suffered repeated invasions from the Crimean Khan's armies in the mid-sixteenth century, Prince Temriuk Idarov hoped to shore up Kabarda's defensive capabilities by centralizing power in this loose confederation into his hands and seeking military allies. He secured a military alliance with Russia, solidified through an oath of allegiance and the marriage of his daughter, Guashanei (baptized Maria), to Muscovite tsar, Ivan IV "the Terrible." This alliance, marking the beginning of Russia's involvement in the North Caucasus, allowed Kabarda to fend off the Crimean threat.⁵² However, Kabarda's fiercely independent princes met Temriuk's centralizing efforts with resistance. Some of the other princely families, especially the Kaitukins, defiantly oriented their domains toward the Crimean Khanate and its protector, the Ottoman Sultan. In a sign of the failure of Temriuk's centralizing efforts, each of the Kabardian princedoms conducted its own foreign policy. Nevertheless, a general pattern became clear by the end of the sixteenth century: in the east, the princes of Lesser Kabarda, closer in proximity to Russia's outpost on the Terek (Terskii Gorod), allied themselves with Russia, while the princes of Greater Kabarda in the west were more fickle in their allegiances. They vacillated between Ottoman-Crimean and Russian protection.

⁵¹ G. A. Kokiev, "Raspad Kabardy na bol'shuiu i maluiu i ustanovivshiesia otnosheniia s sosednimi narodami," in *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarii v trukakh G. A. Kokieva: Sbornik statei i dokumentov*, ed. G. Kh. Mambetov. (Nalchik: El'-Fa, 2005), 198-206.

⁵² Ibid. idem, "Rol' Temriuka v sbliuzhenii Kabardy s Moskovskim gosudarstvenom," in *ibid.*, 532-35.

The balance of power both within and between Lesser and Greater Kabarda shifted frequently from the late sixteenth through late eighteenth centuries. By about 1600, Kazy Psheapshokov's principedom in Greater Kabarda had supplanted that of Lesser Kabarda's Idarovs, as the dominant Kabardian polity. Under Kazy's successors, Aleguka and Khatokshoko, this principedom—Kazy Kabarda—continued its primacy, commanding the allegiance of neighboring Abaza, Karachai, Balkar, and Nogai communities and maintaining friendly relations with both the Crimean Khanate and Russia. Indeed, it is likely that only Russian military aid saved the Lesser Kabardian princes from falling under the control of Kazy Kabarda. Following the death of Khatokshoko Kazyev in 1670, Kazy Kabarda declined and the princes of Greater Kabarda increasingly came into conflict with one another.

Weakened by internal power struggles from the 1670s through the 1730s, Kabarda became a site of frequent invasions by the forces of the Crimean Khan who sought to extend his control into the North Caucasus. Indeed, Kabarda repeatedly suffered brutal occupations by Crimean forces during this period. Despite uniting under the Atazhukin princes to form a successful anti-Crimean coalition in the early eighteenth century, conflict with the other princely families of Greater Kabarda prevented the Kabardians from capitalizing on their military victories. By the mid-eighteenth century Greater Kabarda's four princely families divided into two mutually hostile parties: the pro-Russian Baksan Party and the pro-Crimean Kashkatau Party, named after their geographic locations within Greater Kabarda. The Atazhukin and Misostov princes led the Baksan Party and the Kaitukins and Bekmurzins led the Kashkatau Party. Meanwhile,

pro-Russian Lesser Kabarda, controlled by the Mudarovs and Tausultanovs, grew increasingly weak over the first half of the eighteenth century as a result of raiding by the armies of Greater Kabarda.⁵³

Kabarda exhibited a complex feudal social structure similar to that of some mediaeval western European societies. At the top of Kabarda's social hierarchy were the princes or *pshi*.⁵⁴ Each prince lorded over his own fiefdom. He enjoyed the rights to declare war and make peace and to act as ultimate judge and jury over his vassal princes and serfs. Members of the noble *uork* (rus. *uzden*) class were vassals of princes. Highly skilled in military arts, they formed a prince's retinue and his loyal military commanders during periods of conflict, not dissimilar to the knights of mediaeval Europe. In exchange for their service, princes rewarded their *uorks* with large estates, consisting of several villages (*k''uazha* in Kabardian and *aul* or *kabak* in Russian) and serfs. The *uork* noble class had a hierarchy of its own. The highest noble classes were the *tliakotlesh* (the Tambiev, Kudenetov, and Anzorov families) and *dizhinigo*. These two classes of nobles had the greatest amount of freedom vis-à-vis their princes: they could move their fiefdoms; they commanded the same level of respect and fealty as the princes; and they played a large advisory role in domestic and foreign policy. The numerically larger lesser nobility, the *shautlukhus uorks*, formed the military might of the Kabardian princedoms and they served both the princes and the high nobles. Princes singled out members of this class who demonstrated exceptional bravery in battle to serve in their retinues and

⁵³ Begeulov, 96-134.

⁵⁴ Following the titlature applied to Turkic aristocrats, Russian administrators often referred to Kabardian princes as *murzas*.

personal guards; these elevated lower nobles were known as *beslen'uorks*. The Kabardian peasantry was divided into several sub-classes of varying degrees of feudal dependence. The most numerous was the *tlkhukotl'* class. These peasants were personally free and worked their own land, but paid feudal dues (a portion of their harvest) and performed corvée labor for the nobility. The *pshitl'* serf class worked the land of the lords. Finally, slaves or *unauts*, often non-Circassian prisoners of war, were at the bottom of the Kabardian social hierarchy. An *unaut* usually served as a household servant.⁵⁵

The Kabardian economy was based primarily on transhumance—the driving of livestock (cattle and sheep) to pastures in different ecological zones according to seasonal weather patterns—and horse breeding. Before the tsarist conquest, the Kabardian princes controlled the best mountain pastures of the central Caucasus between Mount Elbrus and the upper Malka and Kuma Rivers (the trans-Malka pastures). During the warmer spring and summer months Kabardians drove their flocks and herds to these alpine meadows; in the colder months they utilized the winter pastures on the plains. Kabardian horses were prized for their speed and agility, and Kabardians supplied the armies of the surrounding Ottoman, Safavid, and Russian empires with horses.

Unlike the surrounding mountaineer societies, which were primarily livestock focused, the Kabardians also occupied open tracts of land on the fertile plains, on which they engaged in extensive, though not intensive, agricultural production. Kabardians practiced long-fallow and slash-and-burn monocrop agriculture until the nineteenth century. After farming a given area for a few years, Kabardian peasants would move to

⁵⁵ For descriptions of Kabarda's social structure see G. A. Kokiev, "Kabardino-Osetinskie Otnosheniia v XVIII v." in *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarii v trudakh*, 132-45.

another area once the soil had become exhausted. They then could allow the land to regain nutrients. Kabardians sold their grain at nearby market towns. Indeed, Kabarda was a primary source of grain for the surrounding mountaineer societies and, in times of drought and famine, other neighboring regions. Invading armies strategically attacked one of Kabarda's key sources of power by burning crop fields. The Kabardians' dominant crop was millet, which they used to feed themselves and, sometimes, their livestock.⁵⁶ Millet-based products, such as *p'aste*—a thick, soft, and cake-like bread—remain staples of the Kabardian diet. In a testament to the importance of agriculture in traditional Kabardian society, a cult developed around one of Kabarda's pre-Islamic pagan gods, Shouzerisha, the protector of farmers.⁵⁷

In contrast to the surrounding mountaineers who constructed their settlements out of stone as permanent fixtures of the surrounding, crag-laden, mountain landscape, the lowland Kabardians' primary building material was straw. Kabardians built their dwellings from this weaker material because the princes and nobles of Kabarda frequently moved their villages in response to a host of socio-economic and geo-political factors. First, given the predominance of slash-and-burn agriculture, Kabardians often moved their settlements to be closer to their new grain supplies after a particular field became exhausted. Second, the Kabardian shepherds' division of their year between highland and lowland pastures meant that they needed mobile dwellings. Third, in terms of geo-politics, Kabarda's position on the open plains meant that it was especially

⁵⁶ T. Kh. Kumykov, *Ekonomicheskoe i kul'turnoe razvitie Kabardy i Balkarii v XIX veke* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1965), 61.

⁵⁷ On the Kabardian economy see E. N. Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza i ikh svyazi s Rossiei: vtoraiia polovina XVI -30-e gody XVII veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1961), 96-103.

vulnerable to invasions from neighboring empires and nomadic steppe peoples. Thus, during these outside invasions, Kabardians sought protection by moving their villages into the mountains. A reflection of the Kabardian-mountaineer symbiosis, the Kabardian elites relied on mountaineer elites to give them and their dependents refuge during these periods of outside invasion. Kabardian lords also often moved their villages in response to internal conflicts with neighboring princes and nobles. Finally, Kabardian lords might move their settlements closer to neighboring ethnic communities in an effort to assert their authority over them. Given the mobility of Kabardian settlements, Kabardian villages were named after their ruling family rather than a particular place as was more common among the mountaineer societies.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, most resettlements occurred within a specific and delineated territory recognized by the elites of the central Caucasus as the feudal fiefdom of a given princely family.⁵⁹

A diversity of cultural-linguistic communities surrounded Kabarda. To the northwest, Abaza societies resided along the upper Urup, Zelenchuk, and Kuban rivers. Kabardian princes recurrently controlled the territory inhabited by the Altykezezs, the easternmost Abaza society, and maps and descriptions often include these Abaza within the borders of Greater Kabarda.⁶⁰ In the autumn and spring, the Abaza relied on the

⁵⁸ On Kabardian settlements see Ibid., 94-95, 115; and S. I. Mesiats, *Naselenie i zemlepol'zovanie Kabardy* (Voronezh: Kabardino-Balkarskii Oblastnoi Ispolkom, 1928), 36-38.

⁵⁹ P.A. Kuz'minov, "Etnodemograficheskaia karta narodov Tereka: razmeshchenie, chislennost' i migratsiia naseleniia v kontse XVIII-pervoi polovine XIX veka," in *Landshaft, etnograficheskie i istoricheskie protsessy na Severnom Kavkaze v XIX--nachale XX veka*, G.V. Novitskii et al eds. (Nalchik: El'-Fa, 2004), 726.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Chichagov's map. *Kabardino-Russkie otnosheniia*, 114-115.

pastures of the Kabardians to the east and the Beslenei Circassians to west.⁶¹ The Abaza speak a northwest-Caucasian (Abkhazo-Adyga) language, distantly related to Kabardian, but most closely resembling the Abkhaz language. The Kipchak-Turkic-speaking Karachai resided in the mountains to the southwest of Greater Kabarda, in the valleys of the upper Kuban and Teberda Rivers. Once residing in the Baksan valley of Greater Kabarda, in the mid-seventeenth century, the Karachai migrated westward across the mountains in what was likely the result of a conflict with Kazy Kabarda's princes (i.e. the descendants of Kazy Psheapshokov).⁶²

Speaking the same language as the Karachai, the mountaineer societies of Balkar, Khulam, Bezengi, Chegem and Urusbi lived immediately to the south and southwest of the Greater Kabardian heartland, in the Cherek, Chegem and Baksan valleys.⁶³ These societies—known by the early twentieth century as “Balkars” after their largest society (*Malkar-El'*)—were most closely tied with Kabarda because the mountains kept them relatively isolated from other ethnic communities. East of the Balkars, along Kabarda's mountainous southern border, were the linguistically Iranian Ossetians. From west to east, there were five Ossetian mountaineer societies bordering Kabarda, each named after their principle valley of residence: the Digorans, Alagirs, Nars, Kurtats, and Tagaurs. Speaking northeast-Caucasian Nakh languages, the Chechens and Ingush, bordered Kabarda along its far eastern and southeastern border. Finally, from the mid-sixteenth

⁶¹ The Kabardians and Beslenei Circassians often came into conflict over control of the Altykezek Abaza. See V.P. Nevskaiia, *Ocherki istorii Karachaevo-Cherkessii*, Vol 1 (Stavropol: Stavropol'skoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1967), 139.

⁶² Kusheva, 170.

⁶³ As a result of Soviet-inspired impulses toward national consolidation, by the end of the twentieth century, many Karachai and Balkars (always culturally and linguistically related), following the writings of national intellectuals, consider themselves members of a common Karachai-Balkar nation.

century, groups of Slavic-speaking Cossacks in resided in scattered fortified villages (*stanitsy*) along the Terek River to the northeast of Kabarda.

The mountaineer societies neighboring Kabarda usually demonstrated a far simpler social organization and less social stratification. Often labeled “tribal societies” by tsarist and Soviet writers, these societies were organized around clans rather than social classes or feudal relations. The primary social unit in the mountains was the village society rather than the fiefdom as in Kabarda. Councils of clan elders, elected at village assemblies, provided the leadership of the village societies in the mountains. Nineteenth-century European observers, judging the Caucasian societies in terms of their own societies, labeled these mountaineer societies “democratic” and the feudal states, such as Kabarda, as “aristocratic.”⁶⁴

Over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, those societies most influenced by Kabarda, through both geographic proximity and socio-economic ties, began to take on the characteristics of Kabarda’s feudal system. In particular, Kabardian patronage empowered local leaders to claim greater rights over their fellow mountain villagers.⁶⁵ Moreover, when mountaineer communities resettled to Kabardian lands, such as the Altykezek Abaza and the Digora Ossetians, Kabardian princes accorded their leaders the same status and privileges as the Kabardian *uork*.⁶⁶

Kabardian princes collected tribute (*iasak*) from some Abaza societies to the west, the Karachai to the southwest, and the Balkars, Ossetians, and Ingush to the south

⁶⁴ Arapov et al., 61-70.

⁶⁵ U. Dzh. Aliev, *Karakhalk: Ocherk istoricheskogo razvitiia gortsev severnogo Kavkaza i chuzheznogo vliianiia na nikh islama, tsarizma i pr.* (Rostov na Donu: Sevkavkniga-Krainatsizdat, 1927), 41-58.

⁶⁶ Begeulov, 29.

and southeast. The standard payment from these tributary mountaineer societies consisted of one sheep per household per year, additional payments in-kind from the entire village (horses, cows, bulls), and a hostage (*amanat*). Aside from the Karachai, from whom the princes of Greater Kabarda took turns collecting tribute, most of these mountaineer societies made their payments to a particular suzerain-prince.⁶⁷ However, the right to collect tribute from various mountaineer societies often figured in the incessant quarrels between the princes of Kabarda, and tributary rights over individual mountaineer societies could shift from one prince to another. The size of tribute payments was directly proportionate to the strength of a given prince. Moreover, during periods of conflict within Kabarda, tributary mountaineer societies seized upon the resultant weakness of their suzerains and resisted Kabardian dominance with varying degrees of success. For example, in the 1740s, as the power of Lesser Kabarda waned as a result raids from Greater Kabarda, many Ingush mountaineers successfully resisted Kabardian dominance and settled the plains of Lesser Kabarda en masse between the rivers Kambileevka and Sunzha.⁶⁸

Sources from the mid-sixteenth through early nineteenth centuries help explain how Kabarda's geographic position allowed its princes to gain political and economic dominance over the neighboring Abaza, Karachai, Balkar, Ossetian, and Ingush mountaineer peoples. The need for vital natural resources (pasturage, grain and salt),

⁶⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁶⁸ Z. A. Kozhev, "Sistema zemepol'zovaniia v kabardino-gorskikh otnosheniiakh (vtoraia polovina XVIII v)," in *Zemel'nye otnosheniia v Kabarde i Balkarii: Istoriia i Sovremennost'*, Kh. M. Dumanov et al eds. (Nalchik: Institut gumanitarnykh issledovaniĭ Pravitel'stva KBR i KBNTs RAN, 2005), 28-32; Begeulov, 139.

access to trade routes, and protection from enemies, were key reasons for the mountaineer societies' dependence upon the rulers of Kabarda.

The need for lowland pasturage led to an economic dependence of the mountaineer societies upon Kabarda. North Caucasia's mountaineer societies practiced transhumance. Kabarda's neighbors could only graze cattle in their highland homelands during the warmest months of the year, from approximately May through October, when the mountains were covered with grass. Biannually, during late autumn and early spring, when feed no longer grew in the mountains, the mountaineers drove their cattle down to Kabarda to graze in the foothills and plains along the Terek, Malka, and Kuma rivers. In his *Travels in Russia and Caucasia: 1770-1773*, the Baltic German naturalist-explorer, Johann Anton Güldenstädt, noted that "Kabardians are more powerful, and the Bazians [i.e. Balkars] drive their cattle on Kabardian land during the winter and therefore must submit to them."⁶⁹

While fully utilizing the limited agricultural potential of the mountains—through terrace farming and cultivating durable crops such as barley—the mountaineer societies had grain reserves for no more than three months on average.⁷⁰ The mountaineers, therefore, also depended on Kabarda for much of their grain. In a 1768 report to Catherine II, Astrakhan Governor Nikita Beketov explained that "the Ossetians have long been beholden to Kabardian lords. As a result of the lack of good land in their mountains

⁶⁹ Johann Anton Güldenstädt, *Puteshestvie po kavkazu v 1770-1773 gg.* (Sankt Peterburg: Peterburgskoe Vostokovedenie, 2002), 225.

⁷⁰ G. Kh. Mambetov, *Zemel'nyi vopros v tvorchestve obshchestvenno-politicheskikh deiatelei adygov, balkartsev, i karachaevtsev v XIX-nachale XX.* (Nalchik: KBNII, 1976), 102-03.

and the need to obtain grain and hay from low-lying areas that the Kabardians have asserted control over, they pay them tribute.”⁷¹

Controlling the region’s major salt deposits, Kabarda also was a primary supplier of salt for the mountaineers. Indeed, the mountaineers’ cattle-breeding economy demanded large quantities of the mineral for the overall health of their livestock, preserving meats, and curing hides. According to Güldenstädt, “with the help of this essential commodity Kabardians not only make great profit from their neighbors, they also use salt as a means to keep these peoples in submission and obedience.”⁷²

In his *Travels in the Caucasus and Georgia in 1807 and 1808*, German orientalist explorer Julius Klaproth provides a concise account of the role of pasturage, salt, and grain in tying the mountaineers’ existence to Kabarda. In explaining the Digora Ossetians’ dependence on Kabarda, Klaproth notes:

Dugorians [sic] cannot survive without Kabarda... they receive from there salt [i.e. from Kabarda’s salt lakes] and, in frequent years of famine in their highland country, millet. Durgorian shepherds set out with their flocks to the lowland valleys of Kabarda, where everything is covered in green from the end of March, while the mountains are still barren.⁷³

Its strategic location, mountainous geography, and the strength of its armies gave it Kabarda a number of additional advantages over its neighbors. First, Kabardian princes and nobles placed their residences and estates at the exits of the mountain valleys and placed toll posts along the major trade routes of the central Caucasus, including the main

⁷¹ Quoted in Kokiev, “Kabardino-Osetinskie otnosheniia,” 153.

⁷² Güldenstädt, 287.

⁷³ Quoted in B. A. Kaloiev ed. *Osetiny glazami russkikh i inostrannikh puteshestvennikov* (Ordzhonikidze: Severo-osetinskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1967), 155; Ju. Klaprot, *Opisanie poezdok po Kavkazu i Gruzii v 1807 i 1808 godakh po prikazaniu russkogo pravitel'stva Iuliusom fon Klaprotom, pridvornym sovetnikom Ego Velichestva imperatora Rossii, chlenom Akademii Sankt-Peterburga i t.d.* (Nalchik: El'-Fa, 2008).

mountain crossing into Georgia along the Dar'ial gorge.⁷⁴ Thus, in order for the mountaineers to trade at the major Russian, Ottoman, and Kumyk market towns, and reach the outside world in general, they needed to pass through Kabarda. In times of conflict with Kabarda, mountaineer communities sometimes were forced to make dangerous treks south across mountain passes into Georgia for essential provisions. Kabardian princes and nobles collected tolls from mountaineers for safe passage across their territory. For example, in their frequent appeals to the tsarist administration for help, Ossetian elders complained that "the lords of Greater and Lesser Kabarda, especially the Akhlovs and Mudarovs of Lesser Kabarda, pressure our travelers." They requested that Russia help them by ensuring their "free passage between their homes and Mozdok and Kizliar [i.e. Russian Cossack towns]."⁷⁵

The communities tied together in this Kabarda-centered system rarely came into *major* conflict with each other. Rather, they more frequently combined forces to fend off external threats. To be sure, Kabardians could pose a threat to mountaineers who did not render tribute. Outside invasion, competition for scarce natural resources (especially land), and the unwieldy mountainous terrain led to high levels of brigandage and inter-communal conflict in Caucasia. However, in the face of these destabilizing factors, Kabarda represented a source of stability in the region. Kabardian princes, with their large armies, provided their mountaineer tributaries with protection from internal and external enemies.⁷⁶ Moreover, Kabardian protection allowed individual clans and

⁷⁴ Kokiev, "Raspad Kabardy," 203-04.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Kokiev, "Kabardino-Osetinskie otnosheniia," 156.

⁷⁶ Begeulov, 64.

families to attain and hold on to power within their societies. Klaproth's description of the Karachai bears witness to the high value placed upon Kabardian protection.

According to Klaproth:

As the friendship of the Kabardian princes is estimated very highly by them, each family strives to obtain the favor of one of the most powerful, that it may secure a protector and mediator in unforeseen misfortunes or attacks. No one will then venture to do any member of it an injury...nay it frequently happens that mean families acquire power and consequence solely through their friendship with Kabardian princes.⁷⁷

Kabarda was also a defensive line between the mountaineer societies and would-be imperial invaders. In particular, a strong and friendly Kabarda safeguarded the mountaineers from the raiding of the armies of the Crimean Khan, his Nogai allies, and other nomadic steppe peoples.⁷⁸

As is often the case with neighboring communities that occupy different, but complimentary, ecological niches, symbiotic relations developed between Kabardians and their mountaineer neighbors. To be sure, Kabardians, especially their strong feudal class, benefitted most from this relationship. Nevertheless, the benefits derived from this system of relations by both Kabarda and its tributaries in the mountains help explain its persistence well into the nineteenth century, despite the tsarist state's bids to end Kabarda's influence over its neighbors.

While the mountaineer peoples depended on the foothills and plains pastures during late autumn and early spring, many Kabardian communities, on the other hand, needed the alpine meadows of their neighbors for the grazing of their cattle in the

⁷⁷ Julius von Klaproth, *Travels in the Caucasus and Georgia Performed in the Years 1807 and 1808 by Command of the Russian Government*. (London: British and Foreign Public Library, 1814), 287.

⁷⁸ Begeulov, 41-44.

summer months. Klaproth explains, for example, that “in the summer, [Kabardians] are forced to drive their herds from the plains, where everything is dried up and mosquitoes torment the cattle, to the mountains of Digora. This connects both peoples and they live in good accord because they both depend on each other.”⁷⁹

Vigorous trade relations existed between Kabardian and mountaineer communities. Mountaineers traded their animal products (cheese, milk, meat, wool) for Kabardian grain and salt.⁸⁰ A disruption in friendly relations between these groups often meant a lack of access to essential provisions for both groups.

At the top of the social hierarchy, feudal vassalage was mutually beneficial for both Kabardian princes and their mountaineer vassals. Kabardian princes often competed for the prestige and economic benefits of collecting tribute from mountaineer elites, while the latter gained political and economic protection from the leaders of rival clans and unruly peasants through their relations with powerful Kabardian princes.⁸¹ Fictive kinship also bound Kabardians and mountaineers together. The widespread practice of *atalyk*—the exchange of children between elite families as a way of forging social and political patronage networks—further reinforced these symbiotic relations. In a useful analogy, Rustam Begeulov, a scholar of pre-tsarist interethnic social and political relations in the central Caucasus, compares “*emchak*” rights gained through *atalyk* to dual citizenship. An individual raised outside of his society of birth as an *atalyk* enjoyed the rights and obligations of membership in both societies. For many mountaineer families, there were

⁷⁹ Quoted in *Osetiny glazami russkikh*, 155.

⁸⁰ A. V. Fadeev, *Ocherki istorii balkarskogo naroda*. (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo 1961), 39.

⁸¹ Ibid.

great benefits to *atalyk*. They could receive the right to use large land allotments from the family of their adopted child. Intermarriage was common, especially between Kabardian and mountaineer elite families. Indeed, virtually all of the leading mountaineer clans were linked to Kabardian princely and noble families through marriage ties.⁸² Fictive and blood relations between the societies of the central Caucasus was especially important for obtaining military aid during major battles. For example, when the nomadic Kalmyks attacked the Kabardians in 1644 several thousand warriors from the surrounding mountaineer societies came to their aid.⁸³

Finally, common adherence to Islam was an important centripetal force in central Caucasia's system of inter-communal relations. Most of the region's indigenous communities had adopted Sunni Islam, however superficially, by at least the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Ossetian mountain valleys, which included a mix of Christian and Muslim villages, were an exception. Beginning in the sixteenth century, Islam first spread to the elites of Kabarda through the influence of Ottoman and Crimean missionaries and, to a lesser extent, from holy warriors (*gazi*) from Dagestan. Trade relations with Ottoman port cities on the Black Sea, particularly Azov, Gelendzhik and Anapa, created an incentive for Kabardian elites (and other Circassian elites in the northwest Caucasus) to adopt of Islam. The close ties between Kabardian elites and those of neighboring communities, in addition to the activity of Ottoman missionaries,

⁸² Begeulov, 62-75.

⁸³ M. I. Barazbiev, "Traditsionnye formy mezhetnicheskikh otnoshenii balkartsev i karachaevtsev s kabardintsami," *Respublika: Al'manakh sotsial'no-politicheskikh i pravovikh issledovaniy*, no. 1 (2000): 48-70. On the ties between the Ossetian elites and the neighboring in the central Caucasus, especially the Kabardian aristocracy, see Islam-Bek Temurkanovich Marzoev, *Osetinskaia feodal'naia znat' v sisteme vzaimodeistviia etnicheskikh elit Severnogo Kavkaza (XVIII-nach. XX vv.)* (Vladikavkaz: Severo-Osetinskii institut gumanitarnykh i sotsial'nykh issledovaniy, 2008).

facilitated the spread of the *Hanafi* school of Sunni Islam to mountaineer communities in the central Caucasus. Up to about the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the societies of the central Caucasus generally featured a superficially Islamicized elite stratum and a majority of peasants and shepherds who still mainly adhered to traditional folk religions with scattered elements of Christianity and Islam.⁸⁴

Adherence to Islamic norms and sharia law began to spread throughout the societies of the central Caucasus in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a unifying measure in response to colonization by Orthodox Russia. In the face of Russian tactics for colonial conquest, Islam became an important tie that bound the diverse communities of the central Caucasus together. Nevertheless, though nominally Sunni Muslims, syncretic versions of Islam combining pre-Islamic customs with Islamic rites and practices developed in the societies of the central Caucasus. Finally, unlike the northeast Caucasus (Chechnya and Dagestan), Sufism, with the possible late exception of the Ingush (who were culturally and linguistically related to the Chechens), never played a significant role among the peoples of the central Caucasus.⁸⁵

Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter one tells the story of the first phase of Russia's conquest of the North Caucasus from 1763 through 1825, and makes two general arguments. First, it argues that Russian officials shifted between opposing extremes in their policies toward Kabarda in an effort

⁸⁴On the Islamicization of Kabarda see Nadezhda Emel'ianova, *Musul'mane Kabardy* (Moscow: Granitsa, 1999).

⁸⁵ Arapov et al, 89-91.

to extend Russian rule over as many peoples and lands as possible. With the Ottoman Empire's concession of Kabarda to the Russian Empire in the 1774 Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca,⁸⁶ Russia endeavored to maximize the size of this territorial acquisition by supporting a broad definition of Kabarda's domains and its claims of suzerainty over neighboring mountaineer peoples. With the Sublime Porte's acceptance of Russia's version of Kabarda's borders, Russian policymakers began to actively support mountaineer societies in their efforts to break free of their land-based vassalage to Kabarda's nobility. These were the very same mountaineer societies that Russian policymakers had claimed were part of Kabarda during the war a few years earlier. In pursuing these opposing policies, Russia consistently took advantage of requests from local leaders for protection against neighboring communities and empires threatening their access to and control of land. Russia used these "invitations to empire" to easily insinuate itself into the political affairs of the region and, with much greater effort, gradually assert its full control over local societies.⁸⁷ Second, this chapter argues that the destruction of the Kabarda-centered system of inter-communal relations was a result of combined military and epidemiological onslaughts during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Despite tsarist efforts to use divide-and-rule tactics to break up this system by attracting mountaineer communities to switch sides and come under Russian protection, social and economic ties between Kabardian and mountaineer elites proved remarkably resilient highly resilient in the face of tsarist conquest.

⁸⁶ The Ottoman concession of Kabarda to Russia occurred despite the fact that the Ottoman Empire never ruled over Kabarda.

⁸⁷ On "invitations to empire" see Sean Pollock, *Empire by Invitation? Russian Empire-Building in the Caucasus in the Reign of Catherine II*. (Phd Dissertation, Harvard University, 2006) This is Pollock's argument. For an explanation of "invitations to empire," 7-8 and passim.

Chapter two examines the period from the conclusion of Russia's conquest of Kabarda in the 1820s to the end of the Caucasian Wars in the early 1860s. During this period, Russia's security dilemma in the North Caucasus comes into sharpest relief. After tsarist conquest, Kabardian society was in a deep crisis—its population had declined by as much as 90 percent, it was unclear who owned what land, and Kabardian peasants and tributary elites from neighboring societies were casting off the authority that Kabarda's princes and nobles had traditionally wielded over them. Many within the colonial administration wanted to fix the problems that Russia's conquest had wrought upon Kabarda and begin weaving its worn-torn society into the administrative, cultural and economic fabric of the empire. Of far greater importance for the military-colonial administration at the time, however, were security concerns associated with on-going conflict in the northwest and northeast Caucasus. In pursuing policies aimed at shoring up regional security—particularly by pursuing population politics of ethnic cleansing and resettlement—tsarist officials subverted imperial integration and impeded the establishment of an effective administration in the Kabardian lands.

With the conclusion of the Caucasian Wars between 1859 and 1864, the tsarist administration in the Caucasus set about reorganizing the administration of the region, transforming social and economic relations, and generally pursuing goals that, for the first time, went beyond immediate security concerns. Chapter three examines the main events that structured social and inter-communal transformations in the North Caucasus in the late-imperial period were: first, the peasant and land reforms—the abolition of serfdom and the reexamination and codification of land rights among the region's

manifold societies—and, second, state policies and modernization processes that encouraged European and Russian colonization of the region. The chapter begins with an examination of the fraught process of reforming land relations and the social structure in Kabarda and its neighboring mountaineer societies as part of the empire-wide Great Reforms. The different approaches to these reforms held by officials in the region demonstrate the different ideological currents within tsarist officialdom and highlight the different roles and goals of different state representatives in the region. Debates among officials over the proper reform course for the central Caucasus ended with the triumph of a conservative policy aimed at shoring up the local native nobilities as bulwarks of support for the tsarist regime.

The reforms of the 1860s failed to solve land problems in the North Caucasus. Rather, they exacerbated existing tensions by giving the best lands to mountaineer elites, former feudal lords, and members of the Russian imperial elite, leaving the region's peasantry with a grossly inadequate amount of farmland and pastures. Moreover, the beginnings of modernization in the Russian Empire led to a sharp increase in Russian colonization, which further exacerbated land disputes and inter-communal conflict. During the Russian Revolution and Civil War years, these tensions exploded into violent ethnicized conflict as ethno-political entrepreneurs exploited them for their own political goals.

Chapter four focuses on the period of socio-economic and political collapse and reconfiguration between 1918 and 1928. Conflicts during this period often began as land disputes between neighboring villages and had little to do with ethnicity. This chapter

demonstrates that in cases where these inter-communal disputes involved culturally and linguistically distinct villages, the Soviet state's championing of the national principle and delimiting of ethno-national borders, transformed and intensified these disputes into ethno-national conflicts involving two peoples rather than two villages. I argue, as Peter Sahlins does for the early-modern Pyrenees,⁸⁸ that the new connections and opportunities created through border-making led individuals to identify with national communities. Villagers learned that they could derive important benefits by claiming membership in a national community—they could gain important support for their cause of securing more land. The popular mobilization surrounding border and land disputes between Kabarda and its neighbors also demonstrate “double assimilation:” assimilation into newly promulgated national communities and assimilation into the supra-national Soviet state.⁸⁹

Most importantly, the early 1920s witnessed the birth of Kabardino-Balkaria as a unitary autonomous region. In a compromise aimed at preventing bloodshed between Kabardians and Balkars, the ethno-political elites of the two communities agreed that because of the intertwined and interdependent nature of Kabardian and Balkar land and economic relations, the two communities should remain united in a common Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast. To ensure the stable functioning of this new multiethnic autonomous administrative unit, Kabardian, Balkar and Russian elites worked out an informal power-sharing agreement that remains in place to this day.

⁸⁸ Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: the making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 155-67.

⁸⁹ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 14.

During the waves of ethnic cleansing that swept through Eastern Europe during and after World War Two, the Stalinist state deported the Balkars from the North Caucasus to Central Asia on false charges of mass treason. The Balkars, along with about a half-dozen other nationalities from the Soviet Union's southern borderlands, spent the next thirteen years living in internal exile as "punished peoples" without full civil rights in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.⁹⁰ The Balkar deportations are the central event around which chapter five is structured. This chapter seeks to understand the links between ethnic processes and the deportations and how the deportations, in turn, affected inter-communal relations and ethno-national identities. In an effort to determine whether local ethno-political factors played a meaningful role in the deportation, the first section of this chapter explores inter-communal relations and Soviet nationality policies in Kabardino-Balkaria during the decade and a half leading up to the deportations. Next, this chapter examines Kabardino-Balkaria's experience during the War, focusing particularly on the six-month Nazi occupation and its aftermath. While some Balkars did fight against Soviet power (just as some of their Kabardian neighbors did), this was common throughout the Soviet territories that came under Nazi occupation and groups of active anti-Soviet collaborators represented small minorities in most regions, including the mountains of Balkaria. Moreover, war-time Soviet policies exacerbated resistance to Soviet rule. I argue that the deportation of the Balkars was a product of Stalinist xenophobia, paranoia, and the growing use of ethnic cleaning as means of pursuing state security goals. Chapter

⁹⁰ I borrow the phrase "punished peoples" from Alexander Nekrich. See A.M. Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples: The Deportation and Fate of Soviet Minorities at the End of the Second World War* (New York: Norton, 1978).

five also examines Soviet nationalities policies during late-Stalinism, a critical but understudied period, focusing particularly on the contrasting experiences of Kabardians and Balkars.⁹¹

The final chapter examines ethno-political mobilization in Kabardino-Balkaria and neighboring national republics during and immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This chapter offers conclusions, based on long- and medium-term patterns and processes, as to why tensions between Kabardians and Balkars did not descend into interethnic violence and the ethno-political situation in Kabardino-Balkaria stabilized while neighboring regions witnessed unrelenting ethno-political deadlock at best and violent conflict at worst. I demonstrate how the long-standing history of cooperation, compromise and economic symbiosis between Kabardians and Balkars and the general lack of socio-economic disparity between the two the peoples impeded the attempts of ethno-political entrepreneurs among the Republic's Balkar minority to mobilize mass support for Balkar separatism.

Finally, the concluding section of the chapter brings together the historiography of Kabardino-mountaineer relations before tsarist conquest—one of the major topics of chapter one—and contemporary ethno-political problems in Kabardino-Balkaria. This section explores how after the stabilization of the political situation in Kabardino-Balkaria by the mid-1990s, ethno-political elites, many of whom came from local research institutes and academies where they studied the ethnography and history of their own nations (as was common throughout the post-Soviet space), returned from the

⁹¹ The major studies of Soviet nationalities policy stop in the late-1930s. See, for example, Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire* and Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*.

barricades to the academy where they continued their ethno-political entrepreneurship as national intellectuals. The need among emergent post-Soviet national communities to invent new traditions and develop new national historical narratives has fueled and funded the work of these national intellectuals.⁹² In an effort to craft useable pasts for their people and legitimize their current national existence, national historians have revised their nations' historical narratives to highlight their group's ancient roots in the region and long history of independent statehood. In the North Caucasus, the national historical narrative of one nation often contradicts that of another. An intense war of words has been waged among neighboring national communities, including Kabardians and Balkars, over historiographical disputes about such issues as which nation is autochthonous to region and the scope, strength, and "ethnic" makeup of pre-modern state formations. In some cases, the work of national intellectuals has served to further exacerbate ethnicized conflicts.⁹³ I demonstrate that despite the success of national intellectuals in attracting a wide (albeit mono-ethnic) readership for their work, with a socio-economic basis for conflict absent, historiographical disputes and ethnicized cultural politics in Kabardino-Balkaria have not led to sustained mass ethno-political mobilization and the crystallization of groupness around ethnicity.

⁹² This discussion of cultural politics and "the invention of tradition" contributes to a larger discussion that Eric Hobsbawm began over thirty years ago. See Eric Hobsbawm, introduction to *The Invention of Tradition* eds Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14.

⁹³ On national intellectuals and politics in the North Caucasus see Shnirel'man, *Byt' alanami: intellektualy i politika na Severnom Kavkaze v XX veke* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2006).

Chapter 1:

Land, Community, and Colonial Conquest in the Central Caucasus

In 1744 the tsarist empire dispatched Moscow cartographer Stepan Chichagov to the North Caucasus to compile a map of Kabarda. The fieldwork for this map and other concurrent Russian missions to Kabarda reflect the latter's increased strategic significance for the Russian Empire in the mid-eighteenth century. A long-standing ally in Russia's struggle with the Crimean Khanate, Kabarda's importance for Russia increased after 1739 when the Treaty of Belgrade made Kabarda a "buffer zone" between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Compiled at the peak of Kabarda's power, Chichagov's map is one of the most complete descriptions of the territory controlled by Kabarda's princes and nobles.¹ This map (see fig. 1) depicts the western frontier of Kabarda in the upper reaches of the Kuma River. The Podkumok and upper Kura rivers form Greater Kabarda's frontier in the northwest, and the Terek River forms Lesser Kabarda's northeastern frontier. The lesser-Kabardian villages in the Sunzha River basin are Kabarda's eastern frontier. The mountains form Kabarda's natural boundary in the south. According to these borders, which were more like fluid frontier zones until the mid-nineteenth century, Kabarda occupied the foothills and plains of the central Caucasus. Far better than their neighbors' mountain valleys, these lands were rich in pasturage, salt

¹ "1744 g.—Opisanie naselennykh mest Bol'shoi i Maloi Kabardy, sostavlennoe geodezistom Stepanom Chichagovym k vypolnennoi im karte Kabardy," in *Kabardino-Russkie otnosheniia v XVI-XVIII vv.*, Vol. 2, eds. N. A. Smirnov and U. A. Uligov (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1957), 114-15.

deposits, and well suited for agriculture. This fertile, productive land allowed Kabarda's princes to dominate their highland neighbors economically and politically.

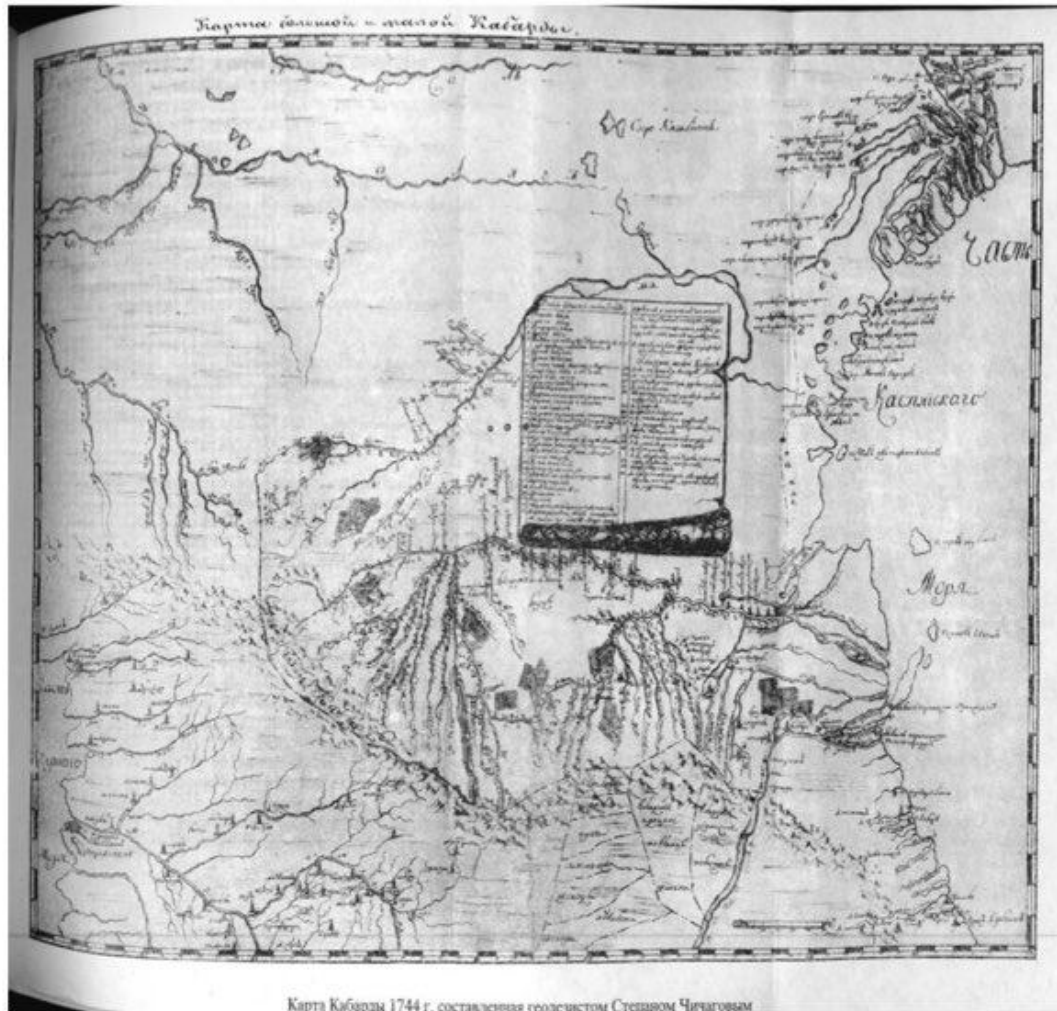


Figure 4: Map of Kabarda compiled by the cartographer Stepan Chichagov in 1744.
Source: *Kabardino-Russkie otnosheniia v XVI-XVIII vv. T. II.*

Some two decades after Chichagov drafted his map, the tsarist state launched a process of imperial conquest that would—through colonization, emigration, deportations, warfare, and disease—result by 1822 in the destruction of the world depicted by

Chichagov. Occurring over less than fifty years, between the 1770s and 1820s, these massive territorial changes that accompanied the Russian conquest of Kabarda were the products of the first stages of Russia's conquest of the North Caucasus.¹ Chichagov presented an "ethno-territorial" picture of the North Caucasus that is vastly different from that of contemporary maps (see figures 2 and 3). Much of eighteenth-century Kabarda now belongs to neighboring communities. The plains south of the Terek River basin, once the heartland of Lesser Kabarda, are now the core territories of Kabarda's Ossetian neighbors. The frontiers of Lesser Kabarda extended eastward into the lands of contemporary Ingushetia. The northern frontiers of pre-colonial Kabarda are now the resort and spa towns of the overwhelmingly Russian Stavropol Province. In the west, at the height of their power, Kabardian princes laid claim to what is now the northeast quarter of the Karachai-Cherkes Republic.²

This chapter tells the story of this important, yet often overlooked, early phase in Russian empire-building and social engineering in the North Caucasus. Integral to this process of imperial expansion was a shift from Kabardian to Russian control in the central Caucasus. Taking place from 1760s to the 1820s, this shift in power profoundly transformed inter-communal and land relations in the central Caucasus and contributed, perhaps more than any other period, to the formation of the region's current "ethno-demographic" makeup. Indeed, much of what happened in the central Caucasus under tsarist rule is the result of changes set in motion between the 1760s and 1820s. During

¹ Most studies Russian of colonization in the North Caucasus focus on the period from the 1830s through 1864.

² Nevskaja, 246.

these years, the tsarist state sought to weaken Kabarda by destroying and reconfiguring the long-established system of inter-communal relations in the central Caucasus. While Kabarda's princes sat comfortably at the top of the social hierarchy in multiethnic central Caucasia, the region's system of inter-communal relations was symbiotic, and all of the cultural-linguistic communities involved derived important benefits through their participation in it. The mutually beneficial nature of these relations explains their persistence, among many of central Caucasia's communities, despite the tsarist state's best efforts to end Kabarda's influence over its neighbors. Even after the 1820s, despite the collapse of the Kabarda-centered system of inter-communal relations, Kabardians continued to influence their neighbors in important ways.

That said, Russian colonialism fundamentally transformed inter-communal relations in the central Caucasus. Old enmities between Kabardians and landless mountaineers dissipated, while others continued to simmer below the surface. Russian culture began to supplant the dominant influence of Kabardian culture among some of the mountaineer populations of the central Caucasus. New antagonisms emerged as the land interests of Russian colonizers sent to maintain Russia's hold on the region clashed with those of the region's native population. Religious affiliations and confessional ties became more important in the relationships between different communities. Finally, at the end of this period, Russia overtook Kabarda as the central political, economic, and cultural force in the region. In particular, Russian officials replaced Kabardian princes as the main arbiters of disputes among the region's different communities. As was common strategy of tsarist rule throughout its multiethnic borderlands, by mediating disputes

between the region's diverse communities, the tsarist state was able to pursue its policy goals and began to integrate the population into the administrative and political framework of the empire.³

The transformation of inter-communal relations in the central Caucasus was both a strategy for and consequence of Russian conquest and colonization. From its early efforts to press its claims on Kabarda after 1774 through General Aleksei Ermolov's brutal pacification of Kabarda in the early 1820s, the tsarist state very consciously strove to end the Kabardian princes' political and economic power over their neighbors. Moreover, the forces of the tsarist Empire worked in conjunction with infectious disease and land pressures in the mountains to severely reduce the territory of Kabarda, and decimate its population. The change in tsarist policy towards Kabarda from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries was tremendous. From their earliest engagements with the Caucasus and Eurasia's southern steppe frontier, Russian (Muscovite and later tsarist) policymakers, grasping the links between land and power in the region, recognized Kabarda as a key polity in the region. Indeed, in addition to controlling neighboring peoples, Kabarda also controlled the major mountain passes and trade routes across the Caucasus. As Michael Khodarkovsky has demonstrated, Muscovite and early-imperial Russia saw Kabarda as a military ally in a common struggle with the Crimean Khanate and sought to strengthen the power of loyal Kabardian princes.⁴ By the 1760s, however,

³ Breyfogle, 74-75.

⁴ For a discussion of Kabarda's important place in the steppe politics of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries see, Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 56, 58, 87-88, 199-200 and *passim*.

concerted efforts at weakening the power of Kabarda lay at the heart of the tsarist state's plans for imperial control in the North Caucasus.

The problems that tsarist officials encountered in trying to end Kabardian elites' power over neighboring communities reminds us that the Caucasus, despite the dominance of the use of "ethnicity" as a category of analysis in contemporary discourse on the region, should not always be viewed as a conglomerate of discrete ethnic groups with their own exclusive interests. Social status was in many respects a great deal more important in determining allegiances and identities in the eighteenth century. Attempts by Russian generals to compel neighboring elites to join them in putting down Kabardian elite-led resistance, or at least cease offering refuge to restive Kabardians, often faltered. Within the region's "un-ranked system of interethnic relations,"⁵ cross-"ethnic" ties among the elites of the central Caucasus were often more salient than ties within cultural-linguistic ("ethnic") communities. Moreover, the tsarist authorities in the central Caucasus had greater success in subverting regional power structures by encouraging peasants to rebel against their feudal lords with whom they usually shared a common culture and language than by attempting to stoke conflict between different cultural-linguistic communities.

⁵ According to Donald Horowitz, "un-ranked ethnic systems" are those in which "groups are cross-class" and ranked systems are those in which "groups are ranked in a hierarchy with one superordinate and one subordinate. See Horowitz, 22. Of course, this is an idealized view and in reality most interethnic systems are not so neatly divided. For example, in pre-colonial the central Caucasus, as we will see, while the Kabardian princes were the most powerful elite sub-group, overall the nobility of the central Caucasus, was composed of relatively equal members of a variety of cultural-linguistic communities. Moreover, Kabardian peasants had a relatively equal social status to, for example, Ossetian and Balkar peasants.

Russian Policy toward Kabarda and its Tributaries Societies until 1774

For all its benefits, the cross-cultural symbiosis among the peoples of the central Caucasus was not always well accepted by those subordinate to the Kabardian princes—and Russian officials did their best to make use of these inter-communal tensions to further the interests of their empire. During moments of Kabardian weakness due to infighting among Kabarda's princely parties, individual mountaineer societies of the central Caucasus periodically challenged Kabardian princely power by refusing the render tribute for land use and by fending off resultant Kabardian punitive raids. In particular, mountaineer societies farthest away from Greater Kabarda—the stronger of the two Kabardas—and those with social structures most different from that of Kabarda were most successful at challenging Kabardian power. For example, as Lesser Kabarda declined vis-à-vis Greater Kabarda in the eighteenth century, the Ingush societies to the southeast of Lesser Kabarda rejected their previous tributary relations with Kabarda's princes. By the 1740s, Ingush communities began permanently settling the plains along the southeast frontiers of Lesser Kabarda. Thereafter, Kabardian princely armies would often raid Ingush villages in hopes of forcing the Ingush communities into resuming their tribute payments. The Kabardian princes' economic and social dominance over the Ingush societies was also tenuous because the Ingush societies did not have a feudal social structure with a noble stratum that could be easily incorporated into Kabarda's social hierarchy.⁶

⁶ Begeulov, 51-52.

Russian officials, understanding the socio-economic inequalities between Kabarda and its neighbors, saw the possibility of exploiting these inequalities long before they actually began to do so. In 1650, the Muscovite state sent an embassy to the western Georgian Kingdom of Imeretia, an important ally in its struggle against an expanding Ottoman Empire. The Muscovite ambassadors, Nikifor Tolochanov and Aleksei Ievlev, relied on the princes of Kabarda for safe passage to Georgia. At the time, Kabarda was Russia's most important ally in the North Caucasus given its suzerainty over surrounding mountaineer societies and control over the strategic military-trade routes across the Caucasus range. While in Kabarda, Tolochanov and Ievlev met with representatives of some of Kabarda's tributary mountaineer societies, including Balkars and Ossetians. The accounts of these meetings provide some of the earliest sources on the economic and socio-political relations between Kabarda and its neighbors. In particular, the Muscovite representatives met with Izmail and Chibirka, delegates from Digora, the Ossetian society closest to and most heavily influenced by Kabarda. The Digorans described the relationship between Digora and Kabarda: "for protection they pay tribute [*iasak*] to the [Kabardian] Cherkasskii princes Aleguka and Khodozhduka and the noble Zazaruka Anzorov, in the amount of 10 cows or bulls, one hostage [*iasyr*], and one good horse from each village [*kabak*], and one sheep..., a bushel of wheat, and a bushel of millet from each household."⁷ This was a fairly typical tributary arrangement for the mountain tribes under Kabardian suzerainty. However, in the first of numerous mountaineer appeals for Russian support in throwing off Kabardian suzerainty, the Digorans made

⁷ M. Polievktov, *Posol'stvo stol'nika Tolchanova i d'iaka Ievleva v Imeretiiu: 1650-1652* (Tiflis: Tiflisskii Universitet, 1926), 119.

clear that “if your ruler allows for the construction of a town and the placement of military people near the mountains, then the Digorans and all mountaineer peoples will be your ruler’s servants. And the tribute we now give to the Kabardian princes we will begin to give to sovereign of Moscow.”⁸

Just as “Estonians and Latvians in the nineteenth century...saw the Russian state as a potential ally in their dealings with the Baltic Germans,”⁹ from the mid-eighteenth century through the first quarter of the nineteenth century, some mountaineer communities in the central Caucasus saw the Russian state as an ally in their struggle with the Kabardian nobility. Despite Russia’s repeated rejection of their appeals, until the 1820s mountaineer elites continued to petition the tsarist administration for help in ending the Kabardian nobility’s economic dominance over their societies. Indeed, for several reasons, these appeals steadily increased in the eighteenth century. As Kabarda’s power reached its apogee in the mid-eighteenth century,¹⁰ Kabardian princes increased their tribute demands on the mountaineer societies. Detachments of Kabardian nobles raided mountaineer villages to collect the increased tribute by force and bring recalcitrant communities back under their economic and political control.¹¹ At the same time, however, one of the major benefits of Kabardian supremacy in the central Caucasus, protection from external enemies, steadily diminished as the ability of the Crimean

⁸ Ibid., 120.

⁹ Breyfogle, 60. On Russian policies and inter-communal relations in the Baltics see, Edward C. Thaden and Marianna Foster Thaden, *Russia’s Western Borderlands* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Edward C. Thaden ed., *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

¹⁰ A result of the juridical guarantees to Kabarda’s sovereignty made by the 1739 Treaty of Belgrade.

¹¹ Begeulov, 47.

Khanate to conduct devastating raids on the mountaineers weakened.¹² Moreover, Ossetian and Ingush mountaineer societies experienced Malthusian pressures as the limited agricultural and pasture resources of their mountain valleys could no longer sustain their growing populations. This land shortage in the mountains forced many mountaineers to resettle to the plains. As we have seen, most Ingush resettlers asserted their control over plains land from the weakest of Lesser Kabarda's princes. By contrast, most Ossetian mountaineers who resettled to plains settled on Kabardian fiefdoms, further increasing the economic control of Kabarda's princes and nobles over these communities.¹³ Finally, the expanding Russian presence in the region, especially in the form of Cossack *stanitsy* (fortified settlements) along the Terek River, encouraged these appeals for protection.

Petitioners asked tsarist administrators in Kizliar and Astrakhan to bring their people under Russian rule (*poddanstvo*) and extend their military settlements into Kabardian territory to provide protection for mountaineers wishing to resettle to the plains. In their petitions to Russian officials mountaineers highlighted their lack of land. For example, Ossetian petitioners requesting land on the Kabardian plains, complained to the tsarist government: "we live in the mountains in very cramped conditions...we suffer great deprivations and some of our low people [serfs] do not have the least bit of arable land where they can sow wheat and millet for their subsistence nor can they keep enough cattle."¹⁴ In 1750, delegates from several Ossetian mountaineer societies traveled to the

¹² Ibid., 45.

¹³ Artur Tsutsiev, "Ob odnom algoritme krizisnogo pricheneniia na Severnom Kavkaze," *Nauchnye Tetrady Instituta Vostochnoi Evropy*, no. 111 (2009): 168-91.

¹⁴ Quoted in Kokiev, *Kabardino-Osetinskie otnosheniia*, 153.

court of Empress Elizabeth to request that she accept their people as Russian subjects, allow them to resettle from the mountains to the Kabardian plains, and provide them with military defense from the armies of Kabardian princes seeking to collect tribute payments for the use of these lands.¹⁵ In 1755, Tagaur Ossetian peasants traveled to the *stanitsa* Kizliar to request the assistance of the Russian government because “several lords of Greater Kabarda are calling upon...Ossetians to [resettle] and come under their power, assuring them protection [from their former Ossetian noble lords], but they do not wish for this and diligently request Her Imperial Majesty’s assistance.”¹⁶ In 1767 Ossetian lords from the Kurtat and Alagir valleys petitioned Astrakhan Governor Nikita Bekitov to “assign to us a proper brigade to protect us from the offensive actions of the lords of Greater and Lesser Kabarda.”¹⁷ Bekitov reported to Catherine II that “all of the Ossetian elders...wish to have our commanders placed over them, which we should by all means try to achieve.”¹⁸

The Ingush elders made similar appeals for Russian protection and assistance in settling the plains. For example, in 1757 the Senate informed the College of Foreign Affairs of “the desire of a mountaineer people called the Kists [Ingush], who live adjacent to the Ossetians and Kabardians, to undertake holy baptism and come under the protection of Her Imperial Majesty.”¹⁹ In the response to Kabardian raids to force the Ingush into submission, Ingush representatives appealed to the commandant of the

¹⁵ Bushuev, 130.

¹⁶ Quoted in Begeulov, 143.

¹⁷ I. I. Iakubova, *Severnyi Kavkaz v russko-turetskikh otnosheniakh v 40-70 –e gody XVIII veka* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1993), 53-54.

¹⁸ Kokiev, “Russko-Osetinskie otnosheniia,” 163.

¹⁹ Iakubova, 61.

Russian fortress-town of Kizliar. These Ingush leaders requested that the Russian authorities “firmly avow to the Kabardians that the people, horses, and other items seized [from them] must be returned” and “assign an officer to the area during the tilling and harvesting of grain so that the Kabardian and [Ingush] do not come to blows.”²⁰

The Russian leadership was not responsive to these pleas and appeals of the Caucasian mountaineers in the mid-eighteenth century. Larger geopolitical concerns precluded Russia’s acceptance of invitations to rule over the mountaineer societies of the central Caucasus. In response to Ingush, Ossetian and other mountaineer appeals for Russian protection, the tsarist leadership instructed its administrators in the Caucasus to do little more than “reassure” (*obnadezhivat*) the mountaineers of Russia’s good intentions.²¹

As long as the Ottoman Empire retained its regional influence, the Russian state was not in a position to risk its relationship with Kabarda for the sake of smaller gains in the hitherto unknown or little-known mountain regions. Whatever Russia’s hopes for future imperial expansion in the Caucasus—which were not high before the reign of Catherine II—and whatever its previous relations with certain pro-Russian Kabardian princes, Kabarda continued to be an important ally and counterweight to Ottoman power in the Caucasus and Russia was bound by the Treaty of Belgrade. This treaty, which ended the Russo-Ottoman War of 1735-1739, recognized Kabarda’s independence. “Regarding both Kabardas and the Kabardian people,” Article Six of the Treaty stipulated that “both sides [Russia and the Ottoman Empire] agree that the Kabardas

²⁰ Ibid., 62.

²¹ Begeulov, 144.

[Greater and Lesser] will be free and not under the control of either empire and, as such, they will serve as a barrier between both empires.”²² The Russian administration understood that the Ottoman Empire would see Russian claims of sovereignty over Kabardian vassals and the dispatching of soldiers to Kabardian lands as interference in the affairs of independent Kabarda. This would be a violation of the Treaty and a *casus belli*. Indeed, the Treaty specifically stated the “Turks and Tatars of the Sublime Porte must not enter or interfere with [Greater and Lesser Kabarda] and they will likewise be left in peace by the All-Russian Empire.”²³ Thus, given Kabarda’s claims to Ossetian and other neighboring mountaineer societies, the College of Foreign Affairs concluded that “leading [the Ossetians] to an oath of allegiance prematurely could evoke some suspicion [*ombrazh*] of harmful intentions from their neighboring powers such as the Persians and Turks.”²⁴ Indeed, too much interference in Kabarda’s affairs could cause Kabarda’s princes to seek Ottoman protection.

Under certain conditions, the Russian Empire’s long-term plans for the region also led it to assist Kabardian princes in maintaining their dominance over their neighbors. Russian policymakers understood that a successful future war against the Ottoman Empire (which they viewed as inevitable), would reverse the Treaty of Belgrade’s ruling on Kabardian independence and allow for the annexation of the North-Caucasian princely confederation. According to this long-term plan, by deferring the immediate extension of Russian rule over the mountaineers of the central Caucasus for

²² Quoted in *ibid.*, 45.

²³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 134-35.

²⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 144.

the larger prize of Kabarda, Russia would later be able to lay claim to both Kabarda and its vassals. Such non-interference would also prevent Russia from needlessly upsetting the Kabardian nobility at time when it needed to maintain their support or neutrality and focus its attention on conducting a successful campaign against the Ottoman Empire. In the interim, it was in Russia's interests to keep Kabarda strong, enable Kabardian princes to maintain their dominance over their neighbors, and even assist these princes in extending their dominion over other Caucasian tribes. The more lands and peoples under Kabardian suzerainty at the time of the next peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire, the more lands and peoples would come under Russian rule with the expected annexation of Kabarda.²⁵

Russia was particularly concerned with shoring up Kabardian claims over peoples along the northwestern frontiers of Greater Kabarda, as these were areas that straddled the Ottoman sphere of influence around the Kuban River. In particular, Kabarda's claims to the region around the upper Kuban and Kuma rivers, where the Altykezek Abaza communities resided, became an area of great contestation between Kabarda and the Crimean Khanate. For example, during a conflict between the Crimean Khanate and Kabarda in 1723, the Crimean armies forcibly resettled the Altykezek Abaza, long-standing vassals of the Greater Kabardian princes, from Kabardian territory to land across the Kuban River under Ottoman-Crimean protection.²⁶ In 1732, Prince Magomed Atazhukin led a Kabardian delegation to the Russian capital to request assistance in

²⁵ This is Zarema Kipkeeva's main point about the relationship between Kabarda and Russia in the second half of the eighteenth century. See Part One of her *Severnyi Kavkaz v Rossiiskoi imperii*, 9-96.

²⁶ Nevskaia, 244.

returning the Abaza people to Kabarda. Russia could not immediately act upon Atazhukin's request. However, the outbreak of war with the Ottoman Empire in 1736 provided the needed window of opportunity. In 1738, a combined Kabardian-Kalmyk-Russian force successfully re-settled a portion of the Altykezek Abaza across the Kuban to Kabardian territory.²⁷ In late 1753, the Ottoman government complained to the Russian ambassador that the Kabardians had illegally annexed Abaza lands belonging to the Crimean Khan. The Russian government supported the Kabardian lords' claims to suzerainty over its neighbors and decisively rejected the pretensions of the Crimean Khan to the Abaza. In response, the Russian College of Foreign Affairs turned the tables on the Ottoman government. Russian diplomats argued that the Kabardian lords, as the ancient protectors of the Abaza, received independence through the Belgrade Treaty. Thus, the pretensions of the Crimean Khan to the Abaza violated Kabarda's independence.²⁸ To cite a final case of Russia's support for Kabarda's claims over its western neighbors, shortly after the beginning of the next Russo-Ottoman War, in 1768, Tsarist General Friedrich von Medem ordered the resettlement from Ottoman controlled territory of "the Abaza, Bashil'bai, and other Kuban peoples to places that belong to the Kabardian people."²⁹

Nevertheless, even without direct Russian support, some mountaineer societies managed to shed their dependence on Kabarda's princes and colonize plains lands previously controlled by Kabarda. In particular, in the 1750s and 1760s, Vainakh

²⁷ "Vypiska ob Abazintsakh," *Kabardino-Russkie Otnosheniia*, Vol. 2, 151-52.

²⁸ Nevskaia et al., 272.

²⁹ Ibid., 260.

communities (specifically, the progenitors of today's Ingush), desperately seeking relief from their land hunger in the mountains, militarily forced the Lesser-Kabardian population out of the Sunzha River basin.³⁰ Weakened by military-political attacks from the stronger Greater Kabarda in the late-seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries, the Lesser Kabardian nobles gradually lost their ability to control parts of their territory and collect tribute from their neighbors.³¹

Ossetian communities, facing the same land pressures as Ingush highlanders, also began to resettle to the plains. However, until the 1820s, Ossetian resettlement was largely limited to the noble *badiliat* class of landowners and their serfs from Digora (western) Ossetia. The less extensive migration of Ossetians compared with that of the Ingush was a result of Kabarda's stronger hold over the Ossetian societies than the Ingush. This was the case particularly because the strongest princes and nobles of Kabarda were located closer to the Ossetians than to the Ingush. Indeed, in the mid-eighteenth century, the lords of Greater Kabarda moved their domains to the exits of Ossetia's mountain valleys to shore up their ability to collect tribute from Ossetian communities.³²

Thus, while the Ingush migrants from the mountains managed to assert control over Kabardian lands, Ossetians could only avail themselves of lands in Kabarda by entering into the service of Kabarda's feudal lords, particularly its princes. The only group at liberty to take on these added feudal obligations was Digora Ossetia's noble

³⁰ Kozhev, 29; N. G. Volkova, *Etnicheskii sostav naseleniia severnogo Kavkaza v XVIII – Nachale XX veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1974), 160.

³¹ Begeulov, 139.

³² *Ibid.*, 159.

class, the *badiliat*. Therefore, between the 1740s and 1770s three *badiliat* families—the Karadzhaevs, Kubtievs, and Tuganovs—encouraged by invitations from Kabarda’s princes, moved with their serfs from Digora to the foothills of Lesser Kabarda. Settling on princely domains of Kabarda, these Digora-Ossetian nobles entered into Kabarda’s feudal hierarchy at the level high nobles (*dizhenugo* and *tlekotlesh*). While always tributaries of Kabardians princes, these Ossetians who migrated to the foothills became princely vassals. However, class affinities between the Kabardian and Ossetian nobilities meant that while giving up their former vestiges of independence, these Ossetian nobles could now count on assistance from the Kabardian feudal elites in their efforts to maintain control over their serfs during a period of socio-economic flux.³³ Aside from the Digorans, who had the closest ties with Kabarda of all the Ossetian communities, most Ossetian communities were only willing to re-settle to the plains with Russian military support, which, in the eighteenth century, was not an option. Only a few of the most well-to-do Ossetians from other societies (Tagaur, Kurtat, Alagir) managed to purchase small plots from Kabarda’s princes in the foothills.³⁴

If, given their need to preserve friendly relations with Kabarda and avoid provoking conflict with the Ottoman Empire, Russia’s leaders were not interested in accepting mountaineer invitations to extend its empire in the central Caucasus, they *were* interested in increasing Russia’s presence in the region through other means. By promoting Orthodox missionary activity among central Caucasia’s religiously syncretic (Islamic, Christian, and polytheistic) mountaineer communities and extending its frontier

³³ Ibid., 51.

³⁴ B. P. Berozov, *Pereselenie osetin s gor na ploskost' v XVIII – XX vekakh* (Ordzhonikidze: Ir, 1980), 40.

outposts, Russia hoped to become a counterweight to Ottoman influence in the region before the renewal of open conflict with the Ottoman Empire (which eventually came in 1768).³⁵

In 1744 the Russian Senate formed a Spiritual Commission for the North Caucasus (also known as the Ossetian Spiritual Commission). This institution, which was staffed by Georgians in an attempt to bypass the prohibition against Russian involvement in the internal affairs of Kabarda and its tributary societies and, as Mostashari argues, because they would “appear less obtrusive [than Russians],”³⁶ marks the beginning of Russia’s active promotion of missionary activity as an insidious form of empire-building in the central Caucasus. Russia justified its missionary activities in the region—as it would continue to do a century later³⁷—by citing the presence of relics of Christianity in the region (e.g. the ruins of Byzantine Churches) and the perceived lack of firm religious convictions among the mountaineers.³⁸ As Michael Khodarkovsky reminds us, “religion and state sovereignty were not and could not be clearly separated, [and] the major powers in the region often laid claims to lands and peoples on the basis of their common

³⁵ On Russian missionary activity as a means of expanding Russia’s influence in the central Caucasus see Firouzeh Mostashari, “Colonial Dilemmas: Russian Policies in the Muslim Caucasus.” In *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, eds. Robert Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2001); Michael Khodarkovsky, “Of Christianity, Enlightenment and Colonialism: Russia in the North Caucasus, 1550-1800” *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 71, No. 2, (June, 1999): 394-430; and Austin Jersild, “Faith, Custom, and Ritual in the Borderlands: Orthodoxy, Islam and the ‘small peoples’ of the Middle Volga and North Caucasus,” *Russian Review* 59 (October 2000): 512-29.

³⁶ Mostashari, 231.

³⁷ For an analysis of Russia’s fixation on the region’s Christian past as part of its missionary activities and imperial ideology for the Caucasus in the nineteenth century see Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*, passim.

³⁸ G. A. Kokiev, “Metody kolonial’noi politiki tsarskoi rossii na severnom Kavkazhe v XVIII v.,” in *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarii v trudakh*, 91-111.

religion.”³⁹ Confession played a major role in the geopolitics of Caucasia. In the North Caucasus, where folk religion remained dominant into the eighteenth century,⁴⁰ the Ottoman Empire promoted the spread of Islam while the Russian Empire sponsored Orthodox Christian missionary activity. In this imperial competition, both empires saw religious affiliation as a chief indicator of political loyalty. Both sought to expand their influence in the region by acting as the protectors of their respective co-religionists. Both empires could use religious conversion as a means to increase its influence in the region without violating the Treaty of Belgrade because Article Eight of the Treaty specified that neither of the powers had the right to protest, if any of the Kabardians or other mountaineer peoples decided to “change faiths” and enter into the service of Russia or the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹ The primary targets for conversion were the Ingush and Ossetian communities along Kabarda’s eastern frontier because they were closest to the Russian border. While the Spiritual Commission hoped to bring about mass conversions, initially it focused its efforts on the elites within the mountaineer societies. It set up churches and schools for the children of the elites. Indeed, in a 1771 rescript to Astrakhan Governor Ivan Jacobi, Catherine II characteristically argued that “in the case of the Ossetians and

³⁹ Khodarkovsky, “Of Christianity, Enlightenment and Colonialism,” 410.

⁴⁰ Traditional folk religion of the Circassians or Adygs (including the eastern Circassians or Kabardians) was pluriform monotheistic. Circassians worshiped a pantheon of Gods, but believed in an underlying unity under the supreme God Tkh’a. See A.T. Shortanov, *Adygskie Kul’ty* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1992) and S. A. Liausheva, *Evolutsiia religioznykh verovanii adygov: istoriia i sovremennost’* (Rostov-on-Don: Severo-Kavkazskii nauchnyi tsentr vysshei shkoly, 2002).

⁴¹ Begeulov, 140.

Ingush and other mountaineers, there is no better means to make them true Christians who are loyal to our side than the enlightenment of their youths.”⁴²

These efforts at conversion among Ossetians and Ingush, especially early on, met with mixed results. Between 1745 and 1792 the Spiritual Commission converted 8,199 Ossetians and Ingush to Orthodoxy.⁴³ These were not low numbers given the small numerical size of these mountaineer communities. However, many of these conversions were in name only and most “converts” continued to practice their traditional religions. Many of these baptized mountaineers were poor peasants who converted for material incentives: five rubles or the equivalent in canvas and tax breaks and trade incentives in Russian market towns. Some managed to take the sacrament of baptism several times, receiving new payments each time. According to one late-eighteenth-century witness, mountaineers “willingly allow themselves to be baptized; some repeat this several times in order to receive the seven yards of rough canvas that they give out for this; however, after their baptism, as proof of their Christianity, all they are able to do is make the sign of the cross and eat pork [as a sign that they were not Muslims—IL].”⁴⁴

Given its fundamental importance to political, socio-economic, and inter-communal relations in the central Caucasus, land played *the* central role in the matter of mountaineer conversions to Russian Orthodoxy (other material benefits played secondary roles). The main impetus for Ossetian and Ingush conversion to Orthodoxy was the hope of many land-poor mountaineer communities that by converting to the Russian

⁴²P. G. Butkov, *Materialy dlia novoi istorii Kavkaza s 1722 po 1803 god.* (Sankt Peterburg: Akademiia Nauk, 1869), 441.

⁴³Kokiev, “Metody kolonial’noi politiki tsarskoi rossii,” 107.

⁴⁴Quoted in Begeulov, 141.

Orthodoxy, the tsarist administration would assist them in resettling to the plains and protect them from Kabardian incursions. Before the mid-1760s, however, Russia could not offer this type of assistance because of the Treaty of Belgrade and a reluctance to start another war with the Ottoman Empire. For example, in 1750 the head of the Spiritual Commission, archimandrite Pakhomii, organized an Ossetian embassy to Saint Petersburg in 1750. The representatives of this embassy, after clarifying the sincerity of their people's conversion to Orthodox Christianity, requested Russia's assistance in resettling and protection from Kabarda's princes. In his memorandum to the Senate regarding the Ossetian question, Count Aleksei Bestuzhev-Riumin, Empress Elizabeth's chief foreign policy advisor, noted the strategic importance of Ossetia for access to Georgia, but conceded that all Russia could do at point was advise the Ossetians to settle "along the Terek River in the immediate vicinity of to the Russian dwellings."⁴⁵ Very few Ossetian and Ingush converts were interested in resettling in the Russian domains farther down the Terek, where land was scarce and of poor quality.

However, Russia's construction of the fortress Mozdok in 1762 and the opening of a religious school for mountaineers here in 1764, on an uninhabited territory on the frontiers of Lesser Kabarda, provided a solution to many of the constraints that Russia faced in the region. Mozdok offered a base from which Russia could expand its influence and promote missionary activity among the mountaineers of the central Caucasus. More importantly, it provided a viable place for resettlement for mountaineers wishing to adopt Orthodoxy and become Russia subjects. Unsurprisingly, the fortunes of the Spiritual

⁴⁵ Iakubova, 51.

Commission and its missionary activities increased significantly with the establishment of Mozdok.⁴⁶

Russia's establishment of Fort Mozdok set off a chain of events that fundamentally altered Russia's political relations with the communities of the region and led to transformations of the cultural-linguistic boundaries of the central Caucasus. While Russia had previously rejected requests to extend its presence into the region, in 1759 the Russian administration took a calculated risk in accepting an "invitation to empire" from Kurgoko Konchokin, a Lesser-Kabardian prince threatened by raids from the stronger princes of Greater Kabarda. Konchokin appealed to Ivan von Frauendorf, the commandant at Kizliar, Russia's main fortress town in the North Caucasus. He requested permission to embrace the Russian faith and resettle with his retainers and dependents across the Terek to lands under Russian protection. That the tsarist administration facilitated the baptism of Konchokin and accepted him as a Russian subject is not surprising; it was long-standing practice for loyal Kabardian nobles to enter into Russia service. What was unusual was the decision to allow an entire Kabardian princely family to convert and become Russian subjects. More unusual still was the decision to allow Konchokin and his family to resettle under Russian protection across the Terek River along the northeast frontiers of Lesser Kabarda. These lands were not settled at this point, but were used sporadically by Kabardians for pasturage and forestry.⁴⁷ Given Russia's imprecise borders in the region, this area, known as Mozdok (Kabardian for "dense

⁴⁶ Kokiev, "Metody kolonial'noi politiki," 86-99.

⁴⁷ For a thorough discussion of Konchokin, the establishment of Mozdok, and its larger significance see Pollock, "Empire by Invitation?" 71-93.

forest”), had emerged as a point of contention between the lords of Greater Kabarda and the Russia administration already in the 1740s when the latter established a guard-post (*karaul*) here to protect its Lesser Kabardian clients from Greater Kabardian raids. In 1744 the princes of Greater Kabarda appealed to the Russian administration for the removal of this *karaul* because “the building was constructed in a place where we chop timber and graze our cattle.”⁴⁸ Even more risky, however, was Russia’s construction, at Konchokin’s request, of a fortress-town on this land in 1762. In addition to upsetting the Greater Kabardian nobility, this move could be interpreted by the Ottoman Empire as the interference in the internal affairs of Kabarda and a violation of the Treaty of Belgrade.⁴⁹

After the establishment of Mozdok, the Russian College of Foreign Affairs issued a plan for the settlement of the new town with baptized mountaineers and other Christian peoples of the Caucasus (Georgians and Armenians). The tsarist administration looked to Armenian merchants in particular to develop local cotton and silk industries.⁵⁰ From its new base at Mozdok, the Ossetian Spiritual Commission began to more actively agitate for conversion and resettlement among the landless mountaineer communities. From this point on the Spiritual Commission’s efforts met with more success. In addition to the 700 Kabardians who resettled near Mozdok with Kurgoko Konchokin in 1759, by 1765, two

⁴⁸ “1744 g. noiabr’.—Pis’mo kabardinskikh vladel’tsev baksanskoi gruppy Bekmurzy Misostova i dr. imperatritse Elizavete Petrovne, s pros’boi unichtozhit’ selenie Mozdok, otavat; im bezhavshikh ot nikh krepostnykh, ne razreshat’ ukhodiashchim iz Kabardy na zhitel’svo v Kizliar kniaz’iam brat’ soboi svoikh uzdenei i krepostnykh,” in *Kabardino-Russkie otnosheniia*, *Tom II*, 123.

⁴⁹ Pollock, “Empire by Invitation?,” 94-106.

⁵⁰ On Armenian and Georgian settlement of Mozdok, see N. N. Velikaia, *K istorii vziamootnoshenii narodov vostochnogo predkavkaz’ia v XVIII-XIX vv* (Armavir: Armavirskii gos. ped. Institute, 2001), 21-65.

years after its establishment, over 500 Ossetians and 200 Kabardians had resettled to Mozdok.⁵¹

Given the incentives for resettlement—tax breaks and free land—and the mountaineers' sharp land hunger, Russian policymakers expected massive mountaineer resettlement to Mozdok. In 1768, Russia's College of Foreign Affairs noted with disappointment, "all of this, however, against the most likely expectations, did not happen."⁵² Frustrated with the pace of mountaineer resettlement, by 1769 the tsarist government looked to supplement mountaineer resettlement by bringing Cossacks from Russia to Mozdok and its environs.⁵³

Why were many reluctant to resettle to Mozdok? According to the historian of inter-communal relations in the central Caucasus, Rustam Begeulov, the initial lack of mountaineer resettlement to Mozdok stemmed from the divergent aims of the Russian administration and most baptized mountaineers.

Most...of those who adopted Christianity wanted to be Russian subjects in name only. Their main goal was an independent existence on the plains under Russian protection, which would, in case of necessity, provide them with political support...they were also ready to provide...additional divisions for the Russian army...[they] viewed allegiance to Russia more as union that allowed for the complete preservation of their internal independence. The Russian administration had in mind real subjecthood with all that it implied:...the subjugation of local peoples to the directives...of military commanders.⁵⁴

Given mountaineer concerns over retaining their freedom, the only Christian converts willing to resettle to Mozdok were those with no freedom to lose—serfs. Indeed, fugitive

⁵¹ Volkova, *Etnicheskii sostav naseleniia*, 139

⁵² G. A. Kokiev, "Pereselenie kabardinskikh kholopov v Mozdok v XVIII v." In *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarii v trudakh G. A. Kokieva*, 228.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Begeulov, 147.

serfs from the societies of the central Caucasus with the most highly developed feudal systems and where Islam had relatively strong roots—Kabarda and Digora Ossetia—formed the main contingent of resettlers to Mozdok. These runaway serfs were taking advantage of a 1743 *ukaz* that applied to the Muslim populations of Kazan, Nizhnii Novgorod, Astrakhan and Voronezh Guberniias (Provinces), which stated that “newly baptized converts [*novokreshchennym*] from the Mohammedan faith would be forever freed from servitude of infidel landlords [*pomeshchikov inovernykh*]...[and]resettled to live among other newly baptized...but if their landlords by their own wishes also take holy baptism, they will be returned to their control.”⁵⁵ Because the Russian administration equated conversion with becoming Russia subjects, most Kabardian and Digoran lords refused to give up their independence by converting. For these lords the loss of serfs was a significant economic blow.

The flight of serfs from Kabardian and Digoran feudal domains became the first major rift between the lords Kabarda (and to a lesser extent, Digora) and the tsarist state. Through the rest of the 1760s Kabardian lords took a series of measures to combat the exodus of serfs to the Russian side. First, they repeatedly petitioned the tsarist administration to close the Fortress of Mozdok and return their serfs. In 1764 the lords of Greater Kabarda sent a delegation to Saint Petersburg with a petition calling for the destruction of the fortress. The delegation argued that Russia had illegally constructed the fortress on Kabardian land. However, Count Nikita Panin—Catherine II’s chief policy advisor at the time—instructed his assistant charged with receiving Kaituko Kaisynov,

⁵⁵ Kokiev, “Metody kolonial’noi politiki,” 101.

the leader of the Kabardian delegation, “to use money to persuade the Kabardian lord to provide a petition that would justify [Russia’s] rights [to Mozdok] in the reasoning of the Porte and Crimean Khan.” This plan worked. On September, 13, 1764, Kaisynov signed a document stating that “the Kabardians have no rights to the area of Mozdok and they cannot graze their cattle within 30 versts [20 miles] of the area.”⁵⁶ With the failure of diplomacy, and after a few unsuccessful clashes with Russian Cossack forces in 1767, the Kabardian landlords began to move their settlements farther away from Mozdok and set up frontier posts to prevent their serfs from fleeing across the Russian side. If they could not persuade Russia to abandon Mozdok, then the Kabardian landlords saw an armed attack again the Russian fort as their last resort.⁵⁷ Understanding the superiority of tsarist forces, the Kabardian landlords also appealed to Russia’s enemy, the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate, for support. As early as 1764, Ottoman representatives had exchanged diplomatic notes with the Russian ambassador protesting the construction of Mozdok and other recent Russian maneuvers in Caucasia as a violation of the Treaty of Belgrade. Russia, however, was able to prove, using Kaisynov’s statement, that Mozdok lay outside of Kabardian territory.⁵⁸ In 1767 several princes from Greater and Lesser Kabarda fled with their retinues to Crimean-controlled, pro-Ottoman, territory across the Kuban River.⁵⁹ It was only in 1774, at the height of another Russo-Ottoman war, that the aggrieved Kabardian landlords were able to count on the support of Ottoman and

⁵⁶ Kokiev, “Metody kolonial’noi politiki,” 86.

⁵⁷ Begeulov, 149.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 151.

⁵⁹ Safarbi Beituganov, *Ermolov i Kabarda: Ocherki istorii* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1993), 11.

Crimean forces in a planned attack against Mozdok and other nearby Cossack fortifications along the Russian frontier.

Kabarda and the Critical Juncture of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768-1774

A Kabardian uprising during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768 marked the beginning of a prolonged conflict between Russia and Kabarda, interspersed with long periods of relative peace. This period of Russo-Kabardian conflict would only reach a conclusion with the conquest of Kabarda between 1818 and 1825—at which point the geopolitical, communal, and social fates of Kabarda and the mountain peoples were forever changed. The first clashes between Kabardian and Russian forces occurred in the summer of 1769. Several Kabardian princes (Misost Bamatov, Khamurza Roslanbekov, El'buzduko Kanamatov, and Dzhanbulat Kautukin) and their retinues refused to swear oaths of loyalty to Russia when war broke out with the Ottoman Empire in late 1768 and they began conducting raids on Russian fortifications around Kabarda. In July 1769, commander of Russian forces in the Caucasus, General Friedrich von Medem, handily defeated the anti-Russian Kabardian forces, whose numbers amounted to little over 200, on the River Eshkakon on the northwest frontier of Kabarda, compelling them to swear new oaths of allegiance to Russia.⁶⁰

The majority of Kabarda's elites, however, initially sided with Russia during this Russo-Ottoman conflict. Numerous factors explain Kabarda's loyalty to Russia at the beginning of the 1768-1774 war. First, despite recent differences over Mozdok and

⁶⁰N. A. Smirnov, *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze v XVI-XIX vekakh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi literatury, 1958), 95.

fugitive serfs, Kabarda had historically benefitted from Russian protection and military aid. Second, Russia was an important trading partner for the Kabardians who hoped to retain their access to Russian markets. Third, Russia was more powerful and, judging by its success in the last Russo-Ottoman conflict, it seemed the likely victor in this one. Fourth, many Kabardian princely and noble families had dynastic ties of service to the Russian state. Fifth, the Russian and Ottoman practice of taking hostages (*amanaty*) from elite Kabardian families ensured Kabarda's neutrality. Finally, a deep-seated antagonism between the Kabardian princes and the Crimean Khan (the Ottoman vassal and representative of Ottoman power in the North Caucasus), stemming from Kabarda's repeated resistance to Crimean invasions and particularly the brutal defeat and slaughter of the Crimean armies in 1708 on Kabarda's Mount Kanzhal, hampered the forging of a Kabardian-Ottoman alliance.⁶¹

Despite the Kabardian princes' proclivity toward maintaining friendly relations with their powerful neighbor, the actions of tsarist administrators in the Caucasus during the war pushed the majority of Kabarda's elites, however reluctantly, toward the Ottoman side. For example, as soon as war broke out, the Cossack forces of the Commandant of Kizliar, N. A. Potapov, seized over 20,000 head of cattle from the Kabardians, as an extra guarantee of Kabarda's loyalty to Russia.⁶² As the Russo-Ottoman war progressed, it became increasingly clear to Kabarda's elite that a Russian victory in the war would

⁶¹ Ibid., 84-106.

⁶² "1768 g. dekabria 2.—Iz raporta kizliarskogo komendanta N.A. Potapova v Kollegiiu inostrannykh del s izlozheniem ego mneniia o merakh privedeniia v pokornost' gorkikh narodov v usloviakh voyny s Turtsiei," in *Kabardino-Russkie Otnosheniia, Tom. II*. 282-84; and "1768 g. dekabria 10.—Reestr vziatogo kizliarskim komendantom N.A. Potapovym u kabardinskikh kniazei i uzdenei skota," in *ibid.*, 285-86.

mean the end of their independence and the curtailment of their power, both, it was feared, over their own dependent population and over their tributary neighbors.

When Russian forces entered Kabarda to “protect” it from Ottoman invasion in 1769, the tsarist Empire nullified the Belgrade Treaty and began to treat Kabarda as a Russian protectorate rather than an independent state. The appointment of Dmitrii Toganov as *pristav* (superintendent) of Kabarda marked the beginning of Russia’s gradual assertion of administrative control over Kabarda’s internal affairs. *Pristavs* performed functions similar to the British Residents in the princely states of the British Raj under “indirect rule.”⁶³ While Kabarda’s Grand Prince or *Wāli* served (at the pleasure of the Russian administration) as the ruler of Kabarda, real central rule in Kabarda, to the limited extent that it existed, emanated from the *pristav*. However, prior to Russia bringing Kabarda’s princely class to submission in the 1820s, political power in Kabarda remained atomized among individual princes, many of whom refused to obey to the orders of the Grand Prince or the *pristav*.⁶⁴

The appointment of Toganov as the *pristav* reflects the multiethnic nature of tsarist officialdom and the empire’s reliance on locals, with intimate knowledge of local societies and cultures, to administer its diverse domains. As was historically the case throughout most of the tsarist and, later, Soviet empires,⁶⁵ in Kabarda, representatives of

⁶³ Michael Herbert Fischer, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System, 1764-1858* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁶⁴ For a discussion of the internal administration of Kabarda before 1822 and the role of the *pristav*, see Zh. A. Kalmykov, *Integratsiia Kabardy i Balkarii v Obshcherossiiskuiu sistemu upravleniia (vtoraia polovina XVIII – Nachalo XX veka)* (Nalchik: El’-Fa, 2007), 35-48.

⁶⁵ On the role of non-Russian elites in the service of the Russian Empire see Breyfogle 45-46; Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, 24-25; Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (Harlow, UK: Longman-Pearson, 2001), 124-36, 150-51. The ethnically non-Russian nature of an important segment of

“Russian” or tsarist power were often selected from among the elites of neighboring, non-Russian peoples. For example, Toganov, the first *pristav* of Kabarda descended from an elite Nogai family long in the service of the tsarist state. Throughout the tsarist period, from Toganov on, representatives of the Russian state in Kabarda were often non-Russians, usually from the elite-strata of regional communities.⁶⁶ By the nineteenth century, as we will see in the next two chapters, administrators in the Kabarda and the North Caucasus were often Georgians and Armenians from the other side of the Caucasus mountain range.

On August 17, 1771, Empress Catherine II issued a Charter (*Gramota*) to the Kabardian people. Aimed at satisfying some of the grievances of the Kabardian lords, this document actually served to further alienate many of them. The Charter addressed the Kabardian lords’ concerns over the loss of their serfs. It promised that the state would monetarily compensate Kabardian lords for those serfs who had already fled across the Russian frontier and adopted Christianity. It also guaranteed that “all native Kabardian serfs who runaway in future [would] be returned back.” However, this document decisively failed to satisfy the Kabardian princes’ chief demand, namely the removal of the Russian fortress from Mozdok. Catherine II’s Charter insisted, “Her Imperial Majesty will never agree to the destruction of the village that we constructed in the vicinity of Mozdok.” In addition, the document further angered the Kabardian elite by addressing “the Kabardian lords, princes, and all the people” as “Our [i.e. Russian] subjects.”

Russia’s ruling elite is highlighted in the following collection of essays on Russia’s multiethnic people of empire. Stephen Norris and Willard Sunderland eds. *Russia’s People of Empire: Life Stories from Eurasia, 1500 to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

⁶⁶ Butkov, 46.

Finally, by chastising all of the Kabardians for the rebellious activity of a minority of their princes, and by claiming that “the abundance of the [Kabardian] people and the means to a comfortable life are the result of the indulgences and kindness We have shown them,” Catherine adopted a patronizing and self-aggrandizing tone vis-à-vis the Kabardians.⁶⁷

The last straw for the Kabardian elite came in November 1772, after the Russian Army defeated the Crimean Khanate and forced the new pro-Russian khan, Sakhib-Gerei, to sign a peace treaty at Karasu. In addition to making the Crimean Khanate an independent state under Russian protection, the Karasu Treaty also ceded Kabarda, an independent state since the 1739 Treaty of Belgrade, to Russia. This was done without the presence or consultation of any Kabardian representatives.⁶⁸ The weakening Ottoman Empire, however, was still at war with Russia. It refused to recognize the Karasu Treaty and backed its own rival claimant the position of Crimean Khan, Devlet-Gerei. As Kabarda’s independence appeared increasingly doomed, the Ottoman government became more desperate to attract the support of the mountaineer peoples of the North Caucasus to their side. Upon ascending to the throne in January 1774, the new Ottoman Sultan, Abdul Hamid, dispatched emissaries to the region to shore up the support of the predominant Muslim population in a Holy War against the Russian infidels. In particular, Ottoman representatives visited the Kabardian and Kumyk princes, who together counted as their vassals and tributaries much of the North Caucasus’s mountaineer population east

⁶⁷ “1771 g. avgust 9.—Gramota imperatritsy Ekateriny II kabardinskim vladel'tsam, utverzhdaushchaia ikh pravo na vozvrashchenie beglykh krest'ian i otazyvaiushchaia im v crytii Mozdoka.” In *Kabardino-Russkie otnosheniia, Tom II*, 299-303.

⁶⁸ Smirnov, 102-03.

of the Kuban River. By the summer of 1774, when Kabarda's princes welcomed large contingents of Ottoman and other anti-Russian forces into their domains, it became clear that the Ottoman agitation had achieved its goal. From Kabarda, Devlet-Gerei and his combined Turkish, Crimean, Kabardian and mountaineer allies staged attacks on the Russian fortresses, including Mozdok. Indeed, when pro-Russian Kabardian princes, Dzhanhot Tatarkhanov and Devlet Kasaev, called upon General von Medem to liberate Kabarda from Ottoman occupation, the latter turned his troops back after learning that the majority of the Kabardian Princes had sided with Devlet-Gerei and the Ottoman forces.⁶⁹

Fighting on the Caucasian front took on a dynamic distinct from the rest of the war. Local communities, upset by Russian expansion but previously too weak vis-à-vis Russia to act on these grievances, used the war and the extra force provided by the Ottoman Empire as an opportunity to attack Russian power in the region and exact their revenge. Indeed, despite the signing of Küçük Kaynarca Peace Treaty on July 11, 1774, which officially ended the war in Russia's favor, fighting between pro-Ottoman and tsarist forces continued in Kabarda until the end of August. General von Medem's forces defeated the forces of Devlet-Gerei and his Kabardian allies in Greater Kabarda's Baksan valley along the River Gundelen on August 29.⁷⁰ Fighting continued partly because, according to the Ottoman reading of the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty, Kabarda did not become part of the Russian Empire. Instead, as the Ottoman administration understood it, Kabarda remained an independent state that was now an ally of the Ottoman Empire. Article 21 of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca stated that "[B]oth Kabardas, that is Greater

⁶⁹ Ibid., 103-05.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 104.

and Lesser, which are neighbors of the Tatars, have strong ties with the Crimean Khan; therefore their annexation to the Imperial Russian Court should be left to the will of the Crimean Khan.”⁷¹ According to the official tsarist reading, this Article of the Treaty made Kabarda part of the Russian Empire because the Crimean Khan had already ceded Kabarda to the Russian Empire in the Karasu Agreement of 1772. However, the Ottoman Empire, never having recognized the Karasu Agreement, consequently also did not recognize Russia’s claims to Kabarda. It was left to Russia to press its claims on Kabarda by force, which it did in August 1774. Ottoman representatives would continue to insist on Kabarda’s independence for years to come.⁷²

The Russo-Ottoman War of 1768-1774 and Russia’s attendant annexation of Kabarda strained relations between Kabarda and its neighbors. After the war, Russia’s rulers were now ready to extend their dominion over Kabarda’s eastern highland neighbors. No longer hindered by the conditions of the Belgrade Treaty, Russia began to actively interfere in the political affairs of the central Caucasus and make special efforts to attract the support of new groups. If Russia had previously denied sporadic Ossetian and Ingush petitions to come under Russian protection, now the extension of Russian rule over these communities was of particular interest to Russian policymakers. These groups took on greater interest for Russia now because they occupied an increasingly strategic position along the northern frontiers of Georgia. Moreover, Russia’s desire to secure the Caucasus Mountains from Ottoman influence during the war also increased Russia’s interest in these Ossetian and Ingush mountaineer societies. At the same time, the

⁷¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 105.

⁷² Smirnov, 109.

Kabardian lords increasingly tried to reinforce or reintroduce their dominion over Ossetian and Ingush societies, launching raids to collect tribute from these recalcitrant groups. This straining of Kabardian-mountaineer relations resulted in many Ossetian and Ingush mountaineer societies swearing oaths of allegiance to Russia during the war.⁷³ While many elites within these Ossetian and Ingush communities would later attempt to throw off Russian rule because it impeded their retention of control over their serfs, the tsarist state began to regard these communities as Russian subjects and their territory as part of the Empire; officials cited these oaths as evidence of this relationship.⁷⁴ For the purposes of international diplomacy, Russia based its claims to Ossetian societies on its annexation of Kabarda. Astrakhan Governor, Petr Krechetnikov, writing to Catherine II after the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty, explained that “Greater and Lesser Kabarda remain in the definite sovereignty of your Imperial Majesty, and because the latter regard the Ossetians...as their subjects, then [Kabarda] united with [the Ossetians] belong to us.”⁷⁵

Toward the end of the war, antagonistic actions of tsarist officials toward Kabardian elites caused relations between Russia and Kabarda to deteriorate further. In 1773, General von Medem attempted to stop Kabarda’s princes from raiding Ingush villages. In response to von Medem’s order for Kabardian princes to cease their raids, the Kabardian elites replied that “the Ingush had long ago been conquered by them and that they had always taken tribute according to custom.” The Kabardian princes threatened to “leave the protection of H[er] I[mperial] M[ajesty]” if Russia did not cease interfering in

⁷³ Begeulov, 151-52.

⁷⁴ Butkov, 300.

⁷⁵ Kokiev, “Kabardino-Osetinskie otnosheniia,” 173.

Kabarda's affairs; however, if Russia ceased to provide protection to the Ingush, the princes promised "reconcile with the Ingush...[and] be unswervingly loyal." General von Medem maintained a pro-Ingush position; he detained twelve Kabardians and planned to use force to protect the Ingush societies. However, not wishing to further anger the Kabardian elites and set them against Russia during a war, the court in St. Petersburg ordered General von Medem "not to protect the Ingush from the Kabardians and to not provoke them [the Kabardians] further because the Ingush themselves admitted that they had been their tributaries."⁷⁶

Russo-Kabardian Tensions and the Politics of Land in the Late Eighteenth Century

In the long term, Russia's victory over the Ottoman Empire in 1774 was a harbinger of great change for Kabarda's powerful position in the central Caucasus. Russia could now pursue its objectives of imperial expansion in the central Caucasus without hindrance or fear of provoking an untimely war with the Ottoman Empire. It was only a matter of time before Russia's imperial ambitions in the region would provoke Kabarda into a full-scale revolt—a move which, given Russia's strength, would lead to Kabarda's slow but steady demise. That said, in terms of Kabarda's relations with its mountaineer neighbors,

While significantly altering Russia's geo-political position on its southern frontier, in the short term, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768-1774 only moderately affected the relationship between Kabardians and their neighbors. Hoping to prevent a

⁷⁶“1773 g. marta 15.—Raport pristava pri kabardintsakh D.V. Toganova komanduiushchemu korpusom voisk na Severnom Kavkaze I.F. de Medem o priezde k nemu 4-kh kabardinskikh starshin s tsel'iu vesti peregovory s de Medemom, i ob otvete kabardinskikh kniazei otnositel'no vzimaniia imi dani s ingushevskogo naroda,” in *Kabardino-Russkie otnosheniia, Tom II*. 308-09.

general Kabardian uprising during the war, Russia avoided actions that would provoke the Kabardian princes into open conflict. Despite the fact that many Kabardian princes allowed Ottoman forces to operate on their domains and even provided assistance in Ottoman raids on Russian forts, Russo-Kabardian conflict at the end of the war had not yet reached mass proportions. While extending Russian rule over Kabarda's southeastern neighbors—Ossetians and Ingush—Russia refrained from providing these communities with the assistance that had led them join Russia in the first place. Russia did not protect them from Kabardian princes' efforts to forcibly collect tribute, nor did Russia offer assistance and protection to communities wishing to resettle to the plains of Kabarda (though Mozdok and Cossack *stanitsy* beyond the Caucasus Fortified Line remained an option). In other words, Kabarda's princes and nobles were allowed, for the time being, to continue to collect tribute from their mountaineer neighbors. Kabarda's princes also retained control of the most sought-after land in the central Caucasus.

In general, after 1774, official tsarist policy toward Kabarda's neighbors differed depending upon location. The tsarist state refrained from interfering with the Karachai and other societies to the west of Kabarda's frontiers because this area was still in the Ottoman sphere of influence. The Russian administration did not interfere with Kabarda's relationship with the five mountaineer societies (today's Balkars) on its southern frontiers because these societies did not reside in a strategically important territory. In the Ossetian and Ingush societies to the east, Russia continued to promote missionary activity and encourage resettlement across the Russian line. But despite promising protection to the mountaineer societies that swore allegiance to Russia during the war, after 1774 the

tsarist administration was reluctant to interfere militarily by providing this protection for fear of stoking tensions with Kabarda. For example, Russian officials still recommended that the Tagaur-Ossetian nobles (*aldary*), as dependents of the lords of Lesser Kabarda, “show them all respect” and that “if they historically paid tribute to the Kabardians, they continue to render this without hindrance so as to not disturb them.”⁷⁷ When eastern Georgia became a Russian protectorate in 1783, the situation on Kabarda’s eastern frontiers began to change. With Russia’s construction of the fortified Georgian Military Highway through eastern Ossetian and Ingush mountain territories as the sole overland road to Georgia, much of the Kabardians elites’ influence over these regions ended.

Russia’s victory in 1774 did not mean an end to Russo-Ottoman imperial competition. The northwest Caucasus up to the frontiers of Kabarda remained under Ottoman influence, a situation incompatible with Russia’s long-term plans in the region. In anticipation of a future war with the Ottoman Empire, Russia immediately began to shore up its expanded frontier in the North Caucasus through the construction of forts and the resettlement of Volga Cossacks to the region. This expansion provoked the Circassian communities on the other side of these new fortified lines, including Kabarda, into open warfare with Russia. In 1777, Russia launched the construction of this new fortification line. This line would extend westward from Mozdok along the northern edges of Greater Kabarda, through the steppes north of the Kuma River where it would branch off into two lines. One would lead to the Sea of Azov. The other would stretch along the right bank of the Kuban (Russia’s border with Ottoman protectorates of the northwest Caucasus) to the

⁷⁷ Quoted in Kozhev, 34.

Taman Peninsula. The older line of fortresses and Cossack *stanitsy* completed with the construction of Mozdok in 1763 provided Russia with a fortified frontier line from Kizilar, near the Caspian Sea, along the Terek River. This new fortification line would establish an official Russian presence across all of the North Caucasus, from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea.⁷⁸

The construction of the Azov-Mozdok Line demonstrates the centrality of land to social, economic, and political relations in the central Caucasus. The Azov-Mozdok Line was an economic blow to Kabarda because it cut it off from large amounts of cropland and winter pasturages on the Kuma steppes.⁷⁹ However, the construction of these new forts—Ekaterinogradsk, Pavlovsk, Mar'insk, Georgievsk—finally convinced Kabarda's princes, already aggrieved by Russia and coming under increasing Ottoman influence, to enter into open conflict with Russia.⁸⁰ From the autumn of 1777, the armies of the Kabardian princes and nobility and the still-independent Circassian communities from the left-bank Kuban began conducting small-scale raids on the Caucasus Fortified Line (i.e. Russia's line of fortress and Cossack *stanitsy* that marked the extent of Russian power in the region) and demanding that the construction of these new forts cease. When the tsarist administration rejected their demands, Kabarda's princes swore off their allegiance and entered into a state of war with Russia. Kabarda's elites enjoyed the support of their tributary mountaineer neighbors. They also concluded alliances with Caucasian societies farther afield, such as the Chechens, Nogais, and Kuban Circassians. By the spring of

⁷⁸ On the construction of Azov-Mozdok Line see, Kipkeeva, 82-96.

⁷⁹ Arapov et al., 50.

⁸⁰ R. Kh. Gugov, *Kabarda i Balkariia v XVIII veke i ikh vzaimootnosheniia s Rossiei* (Nalchik: El'-Fa, 1999), 524.

1779, the anti-Russian revolt had spread across much of the Caucasus Line and Kabardians staged coordinated attacks with their neighbors.⁸¹ Despite some success in cutting off Russian communication between fortifications along the line, by the late-autumn of 1779, the technologically superior tsarist forces under General Ivan Jacobi defeated the Kabardian forces. Over 300 Kabardian princes and nobles perished in major battles in September 1779 alone. On December 9, 1779, the Kabardian elite swore new oaths of loyalty to Russia.⁸²

The tsarist administration harshly punished the Kabardians for their revolt: they had to render crippling reparations; they had to supply the surrounding Russian military garrisons with provisions; and they agreed that they would lose the rights to their serfs should they flee across the Kabardian frontier to Russian territory in revolt. Most importantly, at the conclusion of this peace with Kabarda the tsarist administration established new, abbreviated borders for Kabarda along its northern frontier with Russia's fortification line. The River Malka was the border of Greater Kabarda and the Terek the border of Lesser Kabarda. General Jacobi forbade Kabardians from settling beyond these borders; moreover, they could not legally cross beyond these river-borders without special permission from the local tsarist military administration. This border delimitation particularly hurt residents of Greater Kabarda because it cut them off from vital pastures (the trans-Malka pastures), croplands, and salt deposits. These changes also

⁸¹ Begeulov, 160-61.

⁸² Gugov, *Kabarda i Balkariia v XVIII veke*, 527; Ramazan Trakho, *Cherkesy. Circassians- North Caucasians* (Munich: privately printed, 1956), 16.

impeded the Kabardian princes' access to and ability to collect tribute from their Karachai neighbors beyond the Malka River.

The tsarist administration, troubled by Kabarda's ability to marshal the forces of their neighbors, set out to weaken Kabarda's influence on these communities through its peace terms—a fundamentally important step in the modern reconfiguration of inter-communal relations in the region. One of the clauses of the 1779 oath, for example, obligated the Kabardian princes “to not impede and under no circumstances oppress the Ossetians of the Digora, Karadzhaev, Kurtat, Alagir, and Tagaur societies, as well as the Ingush and all other Russian subjects who are receiving holy baptism and resettling to Mozdok and other places along the Line, because the Kabardians' oppression had no basis besides brute force.” Moreover, the administration informed the Kabardian princes that the mountaineer societies “had never been their subjects.”⁸³ Thus, the tsarist administration outlawed the established practice of Kabardian princes collecting protection payments, often by force, from neighboring Ingush and Ossetian societies. Indeed, the tsarist administration began to send “security” (*zalogi*) to the Ossetian societies in the form of an officer, a brigade of Cossacks, and a priest. The administration charged these security forces with protecting the Ossetians from Kabardian raids and securing safe passage for baptized Ossetians who wished to resettle to Mozdok.⁸⁴

Ending Kabarda's influence over its neighbors was not a simple task for Russia. Given the feudal social structure of the central Caucasus and the supra-ethnic class ties linking the region's elites, many Ossetian nobles did not look favorably upon Russia's

⁸³ Begeulov, 161.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

interference in their affairs. In expanding its influence in the region, Russian colonial administrators entered into a complex web of social relations. This intricacy is perhaps best illustrated by the case of the Ossetian societies. As competition over land increased in the mountains as a result of population growth in the mid-eighteenth century, so too did social conflict between the Ossetian peasantry and the Ossetian nobility who, allied with their fellow Kabardian nobles, were attempting to collect ever greater feudal rents. Given the mutually beneficial relationship and close familial ties between Kabardian and Ossetian princes and nobles, the majority of Ossetian complaints to the tsarist administration about Kabardian oppression came from serfs. Refusing to pay increasing feudal obligations to their Ossetian lords, these serfs hoped to use Russian rule as a means to break free from feudal control. By adopting Orthodox Christianity and resettling beyond Russia's Caucasus Line, Ossetian serfs gained their freedom. In the social conflicts within Ossetian society, the Orthodox missionaries of the Spiritual Commission and the Russian administration, as was common throughout the empire, often took the side of the peasantry, for they saw in them a bulwark of support for the tsarist state.⁸⁵

The response of the Ossetian lords to rebellion among their serfs illustrates the ways that class ties were often more salient than ethnic ties in the central Caucasus. The Ossetian lords, especially those of Digora, facing large-scale serf rebellions from the 1750s on, turned to their Kabardian protectors for assistance in putting down these revolts

⁸⁵ For a discussion of this see, for example, V. D. Dzidoev, *Osetiia v sisteme vziamootnoshenii narodov kavkaza v XVII-nach. XX v. (Istoriko-etnologicheskoe issledovanie)* (Vladikavkaz: Izdatel'stvo Severo-Osetinskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 2003), 90-95. On the support of the non-Russian peasantry against the non-Russian nobility in general, see Kappeler, 124-25.

and forcing the peasantry to submit to their lords. For example, in a 1782 petition to the Russian administration, a community of newly baptized Digora Ossetians complained that “the Badiliat [Digoran feudal lords], who always send in the lords of Greater Kabarda, are upset that we are taking holy baptism and continue to attack us and cause us no small harm.”⁸⁶ Sharing a common hostility toward Russia and deriving mutual benefits from each other, in some areas of Ossetia, particularly in Digora where ties between the local elites and the princes of Greater Kabarda were the strongest, the old system of Kabardino-Ossetian relations continued. Indeed, Digora came under Russian rule later than the other Ossetian societies, when, in 1781, tsarist forces under the command of lieutenant colonel L. L. Shteder brought the Digoran nobility (*badiliat*) to swear oaths of allegiance through force of arms.⁸⁷ However, the Russian alternative to Kabardian feudal rule was more attractive to many Ossetians, who hoped this new power in the region would solve their land problems and stop Kabarda from forcing tribute payments from them.

By the early 1780s, clashes with Russian armies and a creeping Russian encirclement had significantly weakened Kabarda. By this time, Kabarda lost nearly all of its influence over the Ingush and some of its influence over Ossetians. Notably, Russia’s acquisition of eastern Georgia (Kartli-Kakheti) as a protectorate through the 1783 Treaty of Georgievsk increased the strategic significance of the central Caucasus in general and the Ossetian and Ingush lands in particular. The safest and quickest route across the Caucasus range to Georgia lay through Ossetian and Ingush mountainous

⁸⁶M. M. Blied ed. *Russko-Osetinskie v XVIII veke, tom II* (Ordzhonikidze: Ir, 1984) 403.

⁸⁷Dzidoev, *Osetiia v sisteme vziamootnoshenii narodov kavkaza*, 90-95.

territory along the Dar'ial Gorge near the tumultuous upper reaches of the Terek. With the policy imperative of maintaining secure access to Georgia, Russia immediately set about the construction of a fortified road—the famed Georgian military highway—along this highland territory. The fortress Vladikavkaz—its name (“ruler of the Caucasus”) a projection of Russia’s new imperial status in the region—became the starting point of Russia’s road to Georgia. Built in the vicinity of the Tagaur Ossetians and the Ingush in 1784, Vladikavkaz had the secondary consequence of cutting off the Kabardian princes’ access to these mountaineer societies and preventing them from using force to collect protection payments. Indeed, with the increasing Russian presence here, land-poor Ingush and Ossetians peasants began to descend from the highlands and settle the foothills around Vladikavkaz.⁸⁸ Kabarda’s princes looked on with increasing concern as Russia continued to construct forts along its frontiers and, thereby, cut off Kabardians from important economic resources—pasture lands, croplands, and people. Indeed, some Kabardian princes began to make arrangements to resettle to Georgia to escape Russia’s increasing influence.⁸⁹

Despite this weakening, the dominance of Kabarda’s princes in other parts of the central Caucasus continued unabated even after their devastating defeat by Russia in 1779. Count Pavel Potemkin, Russia’s Governor-General in the Caucasus from 1782 to 1787, took a more conciliatory approach to Kabarda in hopes of reconciling Kabarda’s

⁸⁸ Kozhev, 34.

⁸⁹“1782 g. oktiabr’ 7.—Raport polkovnika K.I. Mufelia komanduiushchemu Kavkazskim korpusom P.S. Potemkinu o gotoviashchemsia pobege v Gruziiu uzdenei vladel'tsev Tatarkhanova i Tousoltanova, prinuzhdaiushchikh itti s nimi neskol'ko kabardinskikh selenii,” in *Kabardino-Russkie otnosheniia*, Vol. 2, 341.

elites to Russian rule.⁹⁰ Indeed, Potemkin met the news of possible Kabardian migrations to Georgia with concern and took measures to address some of the Kabardians' grievances. With Ottoman-backed anti-Russian unrest in the Crimea and the neighboring Kuban region in the northwest Caucasus in 1783, and another war with the Ottoman Empire on the horizon, Russia could ill afford a Kabardian insurrection. This was particularly the case because Kabarda could martial the support of its neighbors. As in the 1768-1774 war, Russian policymakers, appreciating Kabarda's enduring strength, hoped to avoid another Kabardian revolt while pursuing Russia's imperial interests in the region.

In 1783, Potemkin officially allowed Kabarda's princes to continue collecting tribute from those mountaineer societies that had not yet come under Russian rule—the Balkars (mountaineer societies of Balkar, Khulam, Bezengi, Chegem, and Urusbi), the Karachai, and the Abaza.⁹¹ At this point, the isolated mountainous territories of the Karachai and Balkars were of little strategic value for Russia. Indeed, Russia's lack of dealings with and attendant dearth of written accounts on these mountaineer societies is the primary reason why their history before the 1820s remains relatively murky. It is precisely at this juncture in the 1780s that Karachai and Balkars begin to show up with great frequency in the Russian sources. Contacts between the local tsarist administration and the Karachai and Balkar societies increased because representatives of these societies began to visit tsarist administrators to request that Russia accept their peoples as Russian

⁹⁰ Pavel Potemkin occupied the top leadership positions in the Caucasus from 1782 but only became the official viceroy of the Caucasus in 1785 when the Caucasus Viceroyalty was created out of the Astrakhan Governorate.

⁹¹ L.I. Lavrov, "Karachai i Balkariia do 30-kh godov XIX veka" in *Izbrannye trudy po kul'ture abazin, adygov, karachaevtsev, balkartsev*, eds. B.Kh. Bgazhnokov and A.Kh. Abazov (Nalchik: KBIGI, 2009), 393.

subjects. Karachai and Balkars hoped that by becoming Russian subjects they could benefit from Russian protection and weaken Kabarda's suzerainty over them as the Ossetians and Ingush had. In response, the Kabardian elite did their best to cut off their Balkar tributaries' access to the Russian lines. Peter Simon von Pallas, German botanist and zoologist in the service of the tsar, for example, reported that Balkars "are seeking a means to come under Russian protection but the Circassians [i.e. the Kabardian elite] are doing everything in their power to impede this and therefore they don't let any of them reach the Line." Those who did manage to make it to Russian outposts across the Line did not receive the reception they were hoping for. Pallas continues that "in 1783 several Bazians [Balkars], sent to seek out this protection, managed to break through [the Kabardian blockade] to meet with Lieutenant Shteder using a roundabout route. But they returned with empty promises."⁹² These Karachai and Balkar efforts to come under Russian protection failed because Russia did not wish to risk another Kabardian rebellion only for the sake of ending Kabardian dominance over several numerically small, out-of-the-way, mountaineer societies.

Governor-General Potemkin also restored the Kabardians' rights to their historic mountain pastures (necessary for their summer transhumance), which were located outside of Kabarda's new 1779 borders. Regaining control of this land meant that Kabardian princes continued to collect payments from neighboring peoples to the

⁹² Quoted in *ibid.*

southwest—Karachai, Balkars, and Abaza—for the use of these trans-Malka (located between the upper-Malka and Kuma Rivers) pastures.⁹³

Kabardian communities deemed loyal by the tsarist administration received permission to resettle across the Malka, north of Kabarda's official 1779 borders.⁹⁴ Moreover, Russia continued to support Kabardian princely claims to suzerainty over neighboring peoples and even facilitated the resettlement of these groups to Kabardian-controlled territory. After about 1783, with the permission of the tsarist government, Kabardians began to settle Piatigor'e (Russia's famed resort and spa region) northwest of Kabarda's eighteenth-century settlement frontier. A center of Kabardian settlement in the sixteenth century, this region, given its position directly abutting the unruly Tatar and Nogai steppes and the absence of natural defenses against Crimean Tatar raids, lacked a permanent settled population throughout much of the eighteenth century. Instead, Kabardians used this relatively flat region to their north for croplands and pasturage when the risk of invasion was minimal.⁹⁵ With the collapse of the Crimean Khanate and Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 1783, the Kabardians, losing a long-standing adversary, hoped to resettle the fertile area of Piatigor'e. The tsarist administration based its decision to include this region within the administrative jurisdiction of Kabarda (*kabardinskoe pristavstvo*) on more than a mere desire to appease the Kabardian elite; the tsarist administration hoped to extend the borders of the empire and bring other peoples under tsarist rule.⁹⁶

⁹³ Begeulov, 166.

⁹⁴ Kipkeeva, 84-94.

⁹⁵ Volkova, 64.

⁹⁶ Kipkeeva, 31

Because Kabarda's borders were not precisely defined, the extent of the territory annexed to Russia through the incorporation of Kabarda in 1768-74 was unclear. In order to maximize its gains and secure Russia's hold over the strategic region of Piatigor'e, then, the tsarist administration turned to population politics and resettled several Kabardian villages to the region to justify claims that this region was part of Kabarda and, by extension, part of the Russian Empire. The tsarist administration also populated Piatigor'e with communities of Altykesek Abazas.⁹⁷ These Abaza societies were Kabardian vassals with a history of alternating between Kabardian and Crimean suzerainty and migrating to one or the other side of the Kuban River (the border between Russia and lands under Ottoman protection) according to geo-political and economic circumstances. Resettling these Abaza to Piatigor'e under Kabardian suzerainty served two purposes for Russia. First, they simply provided more Russian subjects to populate a contested frontier region. Second, semi-nomadic groups like the Abaza (and the Nogais) made securing and establishing borders difficult. Rather than allowing them to be used by anti-Russian forces across the Kuban, Russia wanted to keep these communities permanently settled within its frontiers under its control. The loyalty and compliance of the groups in this area—Kabardians, Abaza, and some Nogais—was guaranteed by the presence of Russian fortresses—Konstantinogorsk, Geogievsk, Pavlovskaiia—and concentrations of Russian forces in Piatigor'e.

By the 1780s, then, in terms of Kabarda's relations with its neighbors, official tsarist policy differed depending upon location. Kabarda's neighbors to the south and

⁹⁷ Ibid., 84-94.

west—Karachai, Balkar, and Abaza societies—either did not occupy land of strategic value to Russia or resided in territories that did not unequivocally transfer to Russia after the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. In these cases, it was to Russia's advantage, at least in the short term, to maintain Kabarda's position of dominance vis-à-vis its neighbors. On the other hand, Kabarda's neighbors to the southeast—the Ossetians and Ingush—occupied strategic locations along Russia's road across the Caucasus to Georgia. It was imperative for Russia to maintain security along this route. Thus, Russia established forts and outposts along the Georgia Military Highway, effectively ending Kabarda's influence in these mountainous regions of eastern Ossetia and Ingushetia. Russia also understood that Kabarda's continuing influence in these regions would be of considerable strategic advantage to the Kabardians in the event of another rebellion against Russia, given that it could block off Russia's access to Georgia. Finally, with the Ossetian and Ingush societies situated farther away from the Ottoman sphere of influence than those to the west of Kabarda, Russia's rights to sovereignty over the Ossetians and Ingush could not be contested by another empire. Thus, by the 1780s, the argument that these groups belonged to Kabarda was not as important for Russia's claims here as it was in areas farther west and closer to the Ottoman protectorates across the Kuban.

Kabardian influence over Ossetians remained substantial even after Russia's official annexation of the Ossetian societies in 1774 and 1781. Ossetians who resettled to Kabardian domains to escape their land-hunger in the mountains still paid feudal rent to the princes of Greater Kabarda. Moreover, despite being pushed back to the north and west by Ingush and some Ossetian societies in the mid-eighteenth century, the princes of

Lesser Kabarda still controlled large swaths of plains territory on the right-bank of the Terek basin through the end of the eighteenth century. Thus, as long as they occupied this territory, Lesser Kabarda's princes, while no longer enjoying the power to conduct raids into the mountains to collect "protection" payments, still collected tribute from Ossetians when they descended to plains to graze their flocks and herds on these lands.⁹⁸

Governor-General Potemkin's more conciliatory policies toward the Kabardian nobility paid off because when a large-scale insurrection in the northeast Caucasus broke out under the leadership of the enigmatic Chechen, Sheikh Mansur, in 1785, the forces of most of Kabarda's princes and nobles remained loyal to Russia. Indeed, even when Russia's situation further deteriorated with the outbreak of a new Russo-Ottoman war in 1787, which featured heavy fighting in the northwest Caucasus, Kabarda continued to demonstrate loyalty to Russia. In addition to respecting and restoring much of the Kabardian elites' claims to lands and people, the tsarist administration successfully co-opted powerful Kabardian princes by providing them with Russian noble titles, military ranks, and state salaries. It would take the rise of new generation of Kabardian elites, less wedded to Russian institutions and power structures, before another large-scale Kabardian like that of 1779 could take place.⁹⁹

Law, Islam and Kabardino-Mountaineer Resistance to Russian Rule (1793-1822)

After securing its position in the central Caucasus with a victory in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1787-1793, Russia launched its first attempts to administratively integrate its

⁹⁸ V. S. Uarziati, *Kul'tura osetin: sviazi s narodami Kavkaza* (Ordzhonikidze: "Ir", 1990), 51-52.

⁹⁹ Begeulov, 165-68.

north Caucasian territories into the empire, beginning with Kabarda. The initial foray of efforts at integration—through the legal system—did not turn out as tsarist officials had hoped and instead provoked a Kabardian opposition movement that increasingly turned to Islam for ideas, goals, and social cohesion. Russia’s introduction of the “Tribal Courts” (*rodovye sudy*) in 1793 ended the relative peace that had reigned between Kabarda and Russia since 1779. A legal system based on a reified version of the existing system of customary law, rather than Islamic *sharia* law, and limited to questions of family law and minor civil and criminal offenses, the Tribal Courts were under the strict control of the Russian administration and its local *pristav*. More serious cases were tried by Russian military courts in Vladikavkaz. By interfering in long-standing power structures and infringing on Kabarda’s internal autonomy, the introduction of the Tribal Courts provoked a renewed and, this time, prolonged, period of Russo-Kabardian conflict.¹⁰⁰

The Russian administration wrongly assumed that the Kabardian elites would be compliant with this transformation of Kabarda’s internal administration. However, by the 1790s a new generation of princely and noble elites had supplanted the older “traditionalist” leadership in Kabarda. Historian Rustam Begeulov refers to this generation of Kabardian elites as “the Islamists” because while the older generation based their rights to lord over Kabarda and its tributaries and their decisions to collaborate with or resist Russian rule on traditional social structures and historic dynastic alliances, this younger generation understood the importance of Islam as a unifying force in the central Caucasus. The “Islamists” viewed the traditional, feudal ideologies of rule in the central

¹⁰⁰ Kalmykov, *Integratsiia Kabardy i Balkarii*, 48-51.

Caucasus as unviable in the long term, because they were proving incapable of checking Russian influence. They sensed the impending collapse of the traditional structures of society and power in the face of Russian colonization.¹⁰¹

The turn to Islam by the younger generation of Kabardian elites was an effort to strengthen inter-communal, supra-“ethnic,” ties and prevent the “balkanization” of the peoples of the central Caucasus into separate communities because the social ties that had bound them before were then unravelling. In analyzing “ethnic conflict” in the twentieth century, Donald Horowitz has argued that “cultural movements,” such as religious revivals, that “reinforce elements of common culture and...suppress differences” often arise out of “concern about potential shifts in group boundaries” as a result of colonial rule.¹⁰² Horowitz refers to such responses to changes in ethno-social boundaries brought about by colonization as “movements of assimilation.”¹⁰³ The Kabardian elites’ attempts to strengthen cross-communal ties by spreading and emphasizing a common Islamic faith among the peoples of the central Caucasus was in large measure a movement of assimilation—a movement aimed at preserving the horizontal alliance of social elites among the peoples of the central Caucasus and strengthening vertical ties across social strata in the face of the divisive policies and outcomes of Russian colonization.

Kabarda’s Islamist leaders, particularly princes Adil’-Girei Atazhukin and Atazhuko Khamurzin, sought to resist the erosion of Kabarda’s autonomy and power, and the general collapse of the Kabarda-centered system of inter-communal relations, by

¹⁰¹ Begeulov, 184-91.

¹⁰² Horowitz, 70.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 70-71.

redefining the relationship between Kabarda and its neighbors on more equal terms. First, over the final decades of the eighteenth century, as Sunni Islam supplanted folk religions in the central Caucasus through the influence of Ottoman missionaries and with the uprising of the Chechen Sufi Sheikh Mansur, Islamic norms became an important integrative force among the peoples of the region.¹⁰⁴ As the class-based ties between Kabardian and mountaineer elites—based on control of land and serfs—weakens as a result of the growing Russian presence, Islam became another, more powerful, supra-“ethnic” force binding the peoples of the region together. Kabarda’s new elites began to cast their struggle against Russia as a holy war (*ghazawat*). Indeed, Islam came to many mountaineer societies, particularly Digora and the Balkar societies, through members of the Kabardian *ulama* (for example, Effendi Iskhak Abukov). More generally, given the historic dominance of Kabardian culture throughout the central Caucasus, it is unsurprising that as Kabarda islamized under the influence of Ottoman missionaries and general anti-Russian sentiment so too did neighboring peoples. This was especially the case among neighboring elites who remained linked to Kabarda’s aristocracy through marital and fictive kinship ties.¹⁰⁵ By the late eighteenth century, Kabardian influence also meant Islamic influence.¹⁰⁶ That said, in Caucasia, Islam never fully eradicated local

¹⁰⁴ On the history of Islam in this region see Emel’ianova; A. Kh Mukozhev, “K voprosu o kharaktere islamizatsii kabardintsev,” *Vestnik Kabardino-Balkarskogo Instituta Gumanitarnykh Issledovanii*, no. 4 (2003): 51-66; and Zh. A. Kalmykov, “Islam v istorii kabardintsev (XIII- pervaiia polovina XIX v.),” *Voprosy kavkazskoi filologii i istorii*, no. 4 (2004): 168-80.

¹⁰⁵ E. B. Sattshev, “Islam v Osetii: istoriia i sovremennost’,” in *Problemy konsolidatsii narodov Severnogo Kavkaza: materialy Vserossiiskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii “Sovremennye etnopoliticheskie i etnokontsional’nye protsessy na Severnom Kavkaze: problemy i puti resheniia”*, (23-27 okt. 2008 g.) (Nalchik: RIA-KMV, 2008), 377-85.

¹⁰⁶ Begeulov, 183-88.

customs (*adat* or *khabze* in Kabardian) and folk religions. A highly syncretic form of Islam developed in the central Caucasus¹⁰⁷

Russia's continued support of missionary activity in Ossetia helped add an important religio-cultural element to the Russo-Kabardian conflict over land and power. Indeed, tsarist officials understood this connection between religion and inter-communal relations and responded by continuing to emphasize conversion to Orthodoxy as a means of weakening Kabardian (now in addition to Ottoman) influence over neighboring mountaineer communities. This missionary activity designed to diminish Kabardian princely power among its neighbors was particularly focused on the Ossetian peasantry because they resided in closest proximity to Russian forts and Cossack *stanitsy*. This use of religion as means of interfering in local power structures and inter-communal relations resembles the way Russian officials promoted Orthodoxy among Estonian and Latvian peasants at the expense of the Lutheranism of the German nobles in the Baltics nearly a century later.¹⁰⁸

Second, based on egalitarian aspects of *sharia*, which the Islamists championed over *adat*, and the pragmatic need to retain the allegiance of neighboring elites through non-coercive means, the Kabardian Islamists began to treat the elites of neighboring societies as their equals rather than their vassals. According to Begeulov, "from the point of view of the Sharia movement...disputes over the social status of Kabardian princes and feudal lords of neighboring societies...were pointless and insignificant."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ A. Kh. Mukozhev, "Islam i adyge khabze," *Istoricheskii vestnik KBIGI*, no. 3 (2006): 426-36.

¹⁰⁸ See Edward Thaden, "The Abortive Experiment: Cultural Russification in the Baltic Provinces, 1881-1914," in Thaden ed., 54-75.

¹⁰⁹ Begeulov, 183-88.

In 1793, the Russian administration, viewing Islamic norms as inimical to Russian power and an impediment to civilizational development in Kabarda as it did elsewhere in Caucasia,¹¹⁰ attempted to replace Kabarda's *sharia* courts with Tribal Courts. The introduction of Tribal Courts in Kabarda had two goals: the weakening of the recently ascendant Islamic clergy in Kabarda and the general assertion of Russian control over administration and political power in Kabarda at the expense of the power of individual princes. Customary law, not *sharia*, was to serve as the basis of this new administrative-legal system.¹¹¹ However, the purview of these courts, which were to be staffed by appointed loyal native elites, was very limited. According to the tsarist decree on Tribal Courts:

Tribal Courts judge civil cases and minor misdemeanors in which the defendants are Kabardian according to [Kabardian] customs and are under the subordination of the Supreme Frontier Court [*Verkhovnyi pogranichnyi sud*], which has the right to hear appeals of these [tribal] courts' rulings. Major crimes, such as treason, murder, and brigandage, are not under the jurisdiction of these courts, but should be tried directly in the Supreme Frontier Court according to the laws of H[er] I[mperial] M[ajesty].¹¹²

The Russian state created *adat*-based tribal courts in the Central Caucasus to counter Islamic influence at roughly the same time as it was creating an Islamic ecclesiastical establishment (the Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Assembly or Muftiate) and

¹¹⁰ On the use of customary law as a means of imperial control in the Caucasus and the views of colonial officials and ethnographers see, Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*, 89-109; and Vladimir Bobrovnikov, *Musul'mane Severnogo Kavkaza: obychai, pravo, nasilie* (Moscow: "Vostochnaia literatura" RAN, 2002), 98-204. For a discussion of the use of customary law over Islamic law elsewhere in the empire see, for example, Virginia Martin, *Law and Custom in the Steppe: The Kazakhs of the Middle Horde and Russian Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001); For a discussion of the use of customary law by modern empires, see Burbank and Cooper, 273, 282, 288, 309, 316-18, 422.

¹¹¹ Kalmykov, *Integratsiia Kabardy i Balkarii*, 49.

¹¹² Quoted in *ibid.*

even promoting Islamicization elsewhere in the empire.¹¹³ This seeming paradox is a product of Russian officials' different perceptions of the North Caucasus, on the one hand, and other Islamic lands in the empire, on the other, particularly the Volga-Kama, Ural and Kazakh Steppe regions. Russian officials viewed the Islamicization of the peoples of the central Caucasus as incomplete and superficial and saw Islam here, more than elsewhere, as a threat to Russian rule. Sheikh Mansur's uprising, which had united many of the peoples of the North Caucasus in holy war against Russia from 1785 until Mansur's capture in 1791, and the Ottoman Empire's support of Islamic missionary activity here, fostered the perception among Russian policymakers of Islam as a threat to Russian rule in the region. Moreover, Russia had only begun Orthodox missionary activity in the religion relatively recently and, therefore, still held out hope for mass conversions. Finally, finding evidence of Christianity's long history in the region, particularly from the medieval kingdoms of the Alans, many Russian officials saw Islam as an aberration from the Christian roots of the region's peoples.

Given that Russian rule was much more secure and long-established among the Islamic peoples of the Volga-Kama, tsarist officials saw Islam here as less of a force for resistance and more as a means of imperial integration through the institutionalization of the religion under Russian state auspices. Tatars and Bashkirs had been Muslims for centuries. Russia had sporadically supported forced conversion to Orthodoxy among Muslims of the Volga-Kama region, but by the late-eighteenth century, Catherine II

¹¹³ On the Muftiate and the institutionalization of Islam in the Russian Empire see Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 50-91 and *passim*.

accepted that Islam was firmly rooted among Tatars and Bashkirs.¹¹⁴ Moreover, Catherine believed that the Tatars of the Volga, who had a long history of relations with their still only weakly Islamicized Kazakh neighbors to the southeast, could be used to spread “civilization” and agriculture among her new nomadic subjects. Associating Islam with the Tatars’ more “advanced” lifestyle of agriculture and trade, Catherine supported Islamicization as a key aspect of the Tatars’ civilizing mission among Kazakhs.¹¹⁵ The peoples of the central Caucasus, by contrast, did not have Islamic neighbors like the Volga Tatars who were noted by Russia’s leadership for their loyalty to the state and civilizational progress.

Kabardian elite society was divided in their attitude toward the Tribal Courts. The older, coopted, “traditionalist” elite generally supported this new institution. The younger elites were opposed to it because it did not give precedence to Islamic law and because it limited Kabarda’s administrative autonomy. First, they claimed that the use of customary law went against the wishes of the Kabardian people who desired a system based on Islamic *sharia* law. This was the most public of their objections and their primary demand became the introduction of *sharia* courts. Second, the curtailment of Kabarda’s previous internal autonomy (which Kabarda continued to enjoy after 1769, despite the presence of a Russian-appointed *pristav*) naturally angered the Kabardian elite. This grievance was more salient because *sharia* law had only put down shallow roots up to this point. Indeed, this new system of Tribal Courts infringed on Kabarda’s autonomy

¹¹⁴ On Muscovite accommodation of Islam among Kazan Tatars see Matthew Romaniello, *The Ellusive Empire: Kazan and the Creation of Russia, 1552-1671* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 117-45.

¹¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 193-240; and Paul Werth, *The Tsar’s Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 47-52.

and customs in a variety of ways: it banned public assemblies not officially sanctioned by the tsarist authorities; it forbade Kabardians from leaving Russian territory without permission of the Caucasus military command; it made harboring individuals who had committed crimes against Russians a criminal offense; finally it outlawed the traditional practice of blood vengeance.¹¹⁶

Disturbances began in Kabarda almost immediately after the establishment of the Tribal Courts. In late 1794, a faction of “Islamist” princes, led by Adil’-Girei Atazhukin, launched an uprising against the Tribal Courts and called for the introduction of a Religious Courts (*dukhovnye sudy*) based on *Sharia*.¹¹⁷ Throughout 1795 and part of 1796 this faction of princes and their retinues fled to the mountains, where they received support from their Balkar and Karachai tributaries, and staged attacks on Russian forts along the Kabardian section of the Caucasus Line. The tsarist forces in the Caucasus under the command of General Ivan Gudovich, succeeded in sapping the momentum from the uprising by arresting and deporting its leaders, Atazhuko Khamurzin and Adil’-Girei Atazhukin, to Ekaterinoslavl’ (Dnipropetrovsk). Nevertheless, sporadic fighting continued in Kabarda and the authority of the Tribal Courts, and by extension that of the tsarist state, especially in Greater Kabarda, remained negligible. Indeed, on the local level, Kabardian society disregarded the Tribal Courts and *sharia* courts functioned *de facto*. In 1798, the leader of the anti-Russian opposition in Kabarda, Adil’-Girei Atazhukin (the brother of Kabarda’s most pro-Russian native elite, Ismail-Bei

¹¹⁶ Begeulov, 170, 185. On the history of blood vengeance in the North Caucasus see Bobrovnikov, *Musul'mane*, 54-60 and *passim*; and Kristin L. Collins-Breyfogle, “Negotiating Imperial Spaces: Gender, Sexuality, and Violence in the Nineteenth-Century Caucasus” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2012).

¹¹⁷ Begeulov, 185.

Atazhukin), escaped from exile and returned to the Caucasus. One of the few native elites respected as much for his learning and erudition as his military prowess and social status, Adil'-Girei Atazhukin became one of the spiritual and military leaders of the early-nineteenth-century anti-Russian resistance among the multiethnic societies of the central Caucasus.¹¹⁸ In 1800, tsarist forces entered Kabarda to punish its princes for their raiding of Digora villages. General Karl von Knorring's forces clashed with 2,000 horsemen and 500 infantry.¹¹⁹ However, the greatest battles in the Russian conquest of Kabarda were still yet to come.

Russia's construction of the fortress Kislovodsk on Kabarda's northwestern frontier provoked the Kabardians to launch a new anti-Russian uprising in 1803. The land around Kislovodsk, along the upper Podkumok River, though uninhabited, was important for the Kabardian economy as pasture land. Moreover, the construction of a Russian fortress here made it increasingly difficult for Kabardians to travel beyond Russian-controlled territory to the unconquered Circassian and mountaineer societies, many of whom were tributaries of Kabarda, across the Kuban in Ottoman protectorate territory. The tsarist administration likely had this in mind when they choose this location for their new fortress.

Tensions in Kabarda worsened in 1804 when the Kabardian elite boycotted the scheduled elections to the Tribal Courts. Instead, a coalition of Kabardian princes and nobles sent a petition to General Pavel Tsitsianov (one of many russified Georgian

¹¹⁸On Adil'-Girei Atazhukin see Safarbi Beituganov, *Kabarda: istoriia i familii* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 2007), 510-30.

¹¹⁹Berozov, 51.

princes who would occupy high positions in the Caucasus administration), Commander-in-Chief of Russian forces in the Caucasus, requesting the introduction of Religious Courts. In his vitriolic response “to the honorable Kabardian princes, nobles, and *effendis*” from April 4, 1804, Tsitsianov wrote:

My blood is boiling over like a kettle and my appendages tremble with an avaricious desire to water your lands with the blood of the disobedient. I am a man of my word and I don't make promises that I can't uphold with my own blood...On my command, bayonets and rivers of blood await you; the turbid waters of the rivers that flow through your land will be painted red by the blood of your families.¹²⁰

In May 1804, large contingents of Russian forces (eight battalions of infantry and four dragoon regiments with 24 cannons) under the command of Lieutenant General Grigori Glazenap entered Kabarda with the aims of squashing the rebellion and forcing the Kabardian elites to accept the Tribal Courts.¹²¹ The Russian presence in Kabarda only further enflamed the Kabardian rebellion. As before, the Kabardians turned to their tributary mountaineer societies for refuge and military assistance. After the first battles on May 9 and 10, the main contingent of Kabardian forces retreated to the mountains of the Chegem Balkars. From their highland redoubt in the Chegem valley, Kabardians and their mountaineer allies consolidated forces and settled in for a long hot summer of fighting. The Kabardian forces managed to hold off the Russian assault thanks largely from help from their neighbors.¹²² First, in addition to providing refuge, Kabarda's mountaineer tributaries provided reinforcements. Glazenap's May 14 report to Tsitsianov

¹²⁰Kh. M. Dumanov ed. *Iz dokumental'noi istorii Kabardino-Russkikh otnoshenii: vtoraiia polovina XVIII – pervaiia polovina XIX v.* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 2000), 117.

¹²¹T. Kh. Kumykov, “Antikolonial'nye dvizheniia i klassovaia bor'ba v Kabarde i Balkarii v pervoi polovine XIX v.,” in *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR, T. I*, 225-26.

¹²²Kuz'minov, “Etnodemograficheskaia karta narodov Tereka,” 721.

testifies to the strength and multiethnic composition of Kabarda's forces: "from eleven in the morning to six in the evening we fought in the valleys against a large detachment of 11,000 desperately fighting Kabardians, Chegems, Balkars, Karachai, and Ossetians."¹²³ Second, smaller rebellions in neighboring valleys, particularly along the Georgian Military Highway in Ossetia, diverted Russian forces from Kabarda.¹²⁴

Despite periodic ceasefires, fighting in Kabarda continued through 1804 and into early summer of 1805. Russian forces managed to restore control over Lesser Kabarda and two of the four fiefdoms of Greater Kabarda. However, as soon as Russian troops left these "pacified" domains, the population rose up once again after receiving news of a general insurrection throughout the central Caucasus. Throughout 1804 and 1805, the domains of the powerful Atazhukin and Misostov princes remained outside of Russian control. In March 1805, General Glazenap entered Kabarda again, this time with a much larger contingent of forces. In this punitive expedition Glazenap terrorized the Kabardian population in hopes of forcing the insurgents to descend from the mountains and recognize the legitimacy of the Tribal Courts. Glazenap's forces burned down eighty Kabardian villages and destroyed Kabarda's grain and fodder supplies.¹²⁵ If the Russian army could not defeat the Kabardians in battle, they would starve them out of their mountain redoubts.

However, it soon became clear to the local tsarist administration that this war could not be won through force alone. Among the concessions offered to the Kabardians

¹²³ *Akty sobrannii Kavkazskoiu Arkheograficheskoiu Komissiei (AKAK), Tom II.* 940.

¹²⁴ Begeulov, 195-200.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

to end the hostilities was the introduction of religious courts. On May 9, 1805, Tsitsianov grudgingly decreed the replacement of the Tribal Courts with the *Mekhkeme*, a legal system based on *sharia* law.¹²⁶ With one of their main demands met, the Kabardian elites, beaten and broken, once again swore allegiance to the tsar and reluctantly submitted to Russian rule for the time being.

After a few years of relative calm, tensions in 1810 between Kabarda and the tsarist administration again boiled over into full-scale war. The results of this conflict were even more devastating for the Kabardian people than the last. In the midst of another Russo-Ottoman War (1806-1812), Ottoman emissaries, hoping to sow conflict in the Russian Caucasus, covertly entered Kabarda with false rumors of Russia's impending defeat and of Russian plans to deport the Kabardians to Siberia.¹²⁷ At a meeting on the upper Malka in the autumn of 1809, Kabarda's ruling elites solidified plans to utilize their ties with their mountaineer neighbors and evacuate their villages to the mountains of Balkaria (i.e. the Cherek, Chegem, and upper Baksan valleys) in the spring and launch another revolt against Russia. In a reflection of the significant social divisions within Kabardian society, several thousand Kabardian peasants, not wishing to resettle to the mountains, fight on behalf of their feudal lords, and potentially suffer another bloody defeat by Russia, sent representatives to the *pristav* of Kabarda, Major-General Ivan Del Pozzo. These dissenting peasants informed Del Pozzo of the planned revolt and requested the assistance of the Russian military in resettling away from their lords across the

¹²⁶ R.T. Khatuev, "Rossiiskoe imperskoe pravo i shariatskii sud na Tsentral'nom Kavkaze: nachal'nyi opyt sushchestvovaniia (konets XVIII – pervaiia tret'XIX v.)" *Istoriia gosudarstva i prava*, no. 22 (2010): 27-31.

¹²⁷ Kумыков, "Antikolonial'naia dvizheniia," 226.

Russian fortified line. Upon entering Kabarda on April 14, 1810, Russian forces under the command of General Bulgakov found that the Kabardian lords had already absconded to the mountains with their serfs. Rather than return to the Caucasus Line, Bulgakov unleashed his forces on the mountains to punish the Kabardians, indiscriminately raiding and burning down villages. On April 25 Bulgakov's forces combined with those of Del Pozzo to unleash even greater destruction upon Kabarda. Bulgakov's punitive expedition resulted in the destruction of 200 villages, the confiscation of 20,000 head of cattle, and thousands of dead and wounded Kabardians.¹²⁸

The increasing harshness against Kabarda was a result of a growing frustration on the part of the military administration of the Caucasus Line with its inability to implement its policies in Kabarda—particularly the introduction of Tribal Courts—and generally prevent Kabardian raids on Cossack villages. These raids had become ever more prevalent as the Cossack population along the Azov-Mozdok line expanded in the final decades of the eighteenth century and the Kabardian population found it increasingly difficult to access their pasture across Cossack lines. Russian military policies, particularly the heavy-handed reprisals and requisition of cattle, only made the situation worse and the cycle of violence spiraled out of control. While administrators in St. Petersburg called for moderation from the generals on the ground, the military administration resisted these calls for restraint, believing that Kabardians would only respect brute force.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 226-27.

The Kabardian uprisings of 1804-05 and 1810 contributed to the demographic transformation of the Kabardian lands and the northwest Caucasus. This period witnessed the first mass resettlements of Kabardian princely and noble families to the neighboring Kuban region, which was under Ottoman protection, to escape tsarist rule. The inter-communal ties among the region's elites facilitated this migration. Ties between Kabarda and the peoples of the left-bank Kuban—Karachai, Abaza, Beslencei, and numerous western Circassian communities—had always been close. Indeed, Adil'-Girei Atazhukin used the mountains around the Upper Zelenchuk River (a branch of the Kuban) as his safe haven from which he directed the Kabardian resistance. Numerous lines of the Atazhukin, Novruzov, Karamurzin, Kasaev, Kaitukin, Tramov, and Kudenetov families, sought to escape Russian rule by fleeing, with as many of their feudal dependents (serfs and slaves) as possible, to live among the peoples of the Kuban.¹²⁹ Of the 275 families who fled Kabarda during the 1804-05 conflict only 115 returned after the cessation of hostilities.¹³⁰

Plague, Land, and Empire

The first quarter of the nineteenth century, a period of intense military conflict, witnessed a massive demographic transformation of Kabarda and the central Caucasus generally. Battlefield deaths and resettlement beyond the Russian frontier contributed to a rapid

¹²⁹ On the resettlement of Kabardians across the Kuban in response to Russian rule see the following articles by T. Kh. Aloev: "Vopros o zakubanskikh territoriiakh Kabardy v kontekste migratsii kabardintsev v pervoi chetverti XIX veka," *Istoricheskii vestnik KBIGI*, no. 3 (2006): 258-70; and "Istoricheskie predposylki vozniknoveniia migratsionnogo dvizheniia v Kabarde vo vtoroi polovine XVIII veka." In *ibid.*, 248-57.

¹³⁰ Volkova, 58-59.

decline in Kabarda's population. But the plague epidemic (*morovaia iazva*) that struck the central Caucasus in the first decade of the nineteenth century was even more significant in this regard, and in terms of the relative ease of Russian conquest. Sources indicate that the central Caucasus has been the site of sporadic plague outbreaks since at least the third century C.E. and in 1971 Soviet researchers, singling out indigenous mountain gophers as the main carriers of plague in the region, classified the central Caucasus as a natural foci of the plague (*prirodnaia ochagovost' chumy*).¹³¹ Already weakened after fighting tsarist colonial expansion off-and-on for a quarter century, the plague hit Kabarda especially hard. This plague epidemic began in Georgia in 1803. The next year the outbreak spread to the North Caucasus through Mount Kazbek infecting the region's Tagaur Ossetian mountaineers first.¹³² Lasting into the 1810s, the effects of plague on the region's ethno-political relations, economy, and demographic makeup were incredibly far reaching.

Wiping out entire family lines and villages, the plague combined with military conquest to produce a massive depopulation in Kabarda during the first decade of nineteenth century.¹³³ While it is impossible to offer an exact figure for the population loss and the relative impact of various factors on Kabarda's demography, historians have ventured estimates. Tugan Kumykov posited that the Kabardian population declined by

¹³¹ A. K. Akiev, S. N. Varshavskii, P. D. Golubev, "Osnovnye zadachi po izucheniiu faktorov prirodnoi ochagovosti chumy v Tsentral'nom Kavkaze," *Problemy osobo opasnykh infektsii* 2, no. 30 (1974): 5-12; V. I. Efrimenko et al., *Chernaia smert' i ee ukrotiteli: ocherki istorii chumy na Kavkaze* (Stavropol: Stavropolskaia kraevaia tipografiia, 2000).

¹³² Begeulov, 171; Kuz'minov, "Etnodemograficheskaia karta narodov Tereka," 746, 750.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 29

as much as 90 percent in the first two decades of the nineteenth century.¹³⁴ Based on Kumykov's estimates subsequent historians have claimed Kabarda's population dropped from between 200,000 and 350,000 in the late eighteenth century to between 26,000 and 35,000 by the 1820s.¹³⁵ Researchers have since determined that the maximum estimate of 90-percent depopulation, which was based on the likely dubious claims of *pristav* of Kabarda Del Pozzo, was an overestimate, though not by much. While historians have long had evidence that Kabarda's population in 1825 stood around 26,000, they have only recently come to the consensus that Kabarda's population at the end of the eighteenth century was between 120,000 and 160,000. Therefore, a more accurate estimate places Kabarda's population loss during the early decades of the nineteenth century at between 78 and 84 percent. Petr Kuz'minov has recently offered an analysis of the causal weight of different factors in Kabarda's depopulation. In studying firsthand accounts of the plague in Kabarda, paying particular attention to victims' symptoms and survival rate, Kuz'minov concludes that of the two varieties of plague, bubonic and pneumonic, Kabardians suffered from the former. The less deadly of the two, the bubonic plague had a mortality rate of 40-50 percent. Kuz'minov estimates the number of Kabardian plague deaths from 1804 through 1811 at between 56,000 and 77,000 out of total population loss of between 94,000 and 134,000. According to these figures then, Kuz'minov attributes about 60 percent of Kabarda's depopulation to the plague and about 40 percent to non-epidemiological factors associated with imperial conquest: battlefield

¹³⁴ Kumykov, *Ekonomicheskoe i kul'turnoe razvitie*, 56-57.

¹³⁵ Gugov, *Kabarda i Balkariia v XVIII veke*, 51; Kushkhabiev, 42.

deaths; tsarist punitive expeditions against villages; migration of Kabardians to unpacified territories; and starvation.¹³⁶

Though we cannot say precisely how many died from plague in Kabarda, eyewitness accounts and Kabardian oral traditions convey the utter devastation of the plague and indicate that disease was the primary cause of this depopulation. “Traveling across all of Kabarda,” wrote one Russian witness in 1808, “I met everywhere devastated and vacant villages, and instead of the former large ones—there are now just a few lowly huts...barely a fifth of the Kabardian population remains and those remaining continue to be devastated by the plague.”¹³⁷ In his 1807 travel accounts, Klaproth describes his travels through Lesser Kabarda, the area most devastated by plague: “Leaving the river Kurp and then the river Akbash, after five versts [3.3 miles] we approached the river Bdaia. Here we saw many villages of the Tausultan family, vacated because of the plague... We reached the village of Akhlov-kabak, or Giliakhstanie, which was formerly the capital and residence of the Giliakhstan princes of the Little [Lesser] Kabarda, but is now depopulated by the plague.”¹³⁸ Moreover, Klaproth gives us a clue as to why plague spread so quickly among the Kabardians: “to this...description of the Little Kabarda I will subjoin a statement of the villages, according to their situation, before the late plague in 1806 and 1807; for most of them have been forsaken or destroyed since that visitation, which made great havoc among the inhabitants...because the Tscherkessians [Kabardians], regardless of the danger of contagion, immediately appropriated to their

¹³⁶ Kuz'minov, “Etnodemograficheskaia karta narodov Tereka,” 739, 741, 748-51.

¹³⁷ *AKAK, Tom IV*. 845.

¹³⁸ Quoted in Volkova, 62-63, Klaproth, 339.

own use the effects of those who died.” Writing in 1807, before the containment of the epidemic, Klaproth hazards an estimate of the extent of depopulation in Lesser Kabarda: “According to this loose calculation, the population amounted to about 2,690 families anterior to the late plague, by which it is now said to be reduced to half that number.”¹³⁹ In a report submitted after the tsarist conquest of Kabarda, Lieutenant Captain Ivan Shakhovskii, a participant in the conquest of Kabarda, recalled the effects of the plague years later, “the Kabardians were one of the most powerful peoples of the Caucasus, but in the beginning of the nineteenth century a plague emerged and, raging for 14 years, in a row, exterminated more than five sixths of their population.”¹⁴⁰

While disease played a greater role in the devastation of Kabarda’s population than the Russian military’s technological superiority, plague greatly facilitated the tsarist state’s conquest of Kabarda. On April 16, 1811, *Pristav* of Kabarda General Del Pozzo wrote to General Aleksandr Tormasov, Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasus Line, “as a result of infectious disease, the Kabardians had become completely weak, having experienced a nine-fold loss of their for great strength.”¹⁴¹ The initial response of the leaders of Kabarda’s Islamist resistance was to explain the plague as divine punishment from Allah for insufficient observance of Islamic norms and rituals, and inadequate resistance to Russian infidel rule.¹⁴² Ironically, the leaders of this movement, Adil’-Girei Atazhukin and Iskhak Abukov died of plague in 1807.¹⁴³ Despite such efforts to rally support for the resistance, in each of the successive Kabardian rebellions, the strength of

¹³⁹ Ibid., 356-357.

¹⁴⁰ Beituganov, *Ermolov i Kabarda*. 52.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in *ibid.*

¹⁴² Begeulov, 194.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 203.

the Kabardian forces diminished while the destructive abilities of the tsarist army increased. While war fatigue and differentials in size and technology help explain this tendency, it was also clearly the result of the plague's destructive effects. A Kabardian proverb of the time helps us to understand the connection between plague and military conquest: "What remained after the plague, the River Kumbileevka carried off" (*"Emynem k"elar kh"umbaleim ekh'yzh"*).¹⁴⁴ The River Kumbileevka, then the southeastern border of Kabarda, was the end point of Bulgakov's deadly 1810 punitive expedition. Indeed, General Aleksei Ermolov, the mastermind behind the brutal final conquest of Kabarda between 1818 and 1825, explicitly credited the plague in facilitating his task:

The plague was our ally against the Kabardians because, having completely destroyed the population of Lesser Kabarda and ravaged much of Greater Kabarda, the Kabardians were so weakened that they could no longer assemble large forces. Rather, they sent out small raiding parties. Had it been otherwise, our armies, stretched thin over a large territory, would have been in great danger.¹⁴⁵

This interplay between disease and colonial conquest is, of course, not unique to Kabarda.¹⁴⁶ Given the region's historic openness to world trade and imperial conquest, and its past history of plague, the Russian conquest of Kabarda was not an example of what Alfred Crosby termed "ecological imperialism."¹⁴⁷ However, the central Caucasus

¹⁴⁴ T.Kh. Kumykov, "Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie otnosheniia v Kabarde i Balkarii v pervoi polovine XIX v.," in *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR*, Vol. 1, 196.

¹⁴⁵ Gugov, *Kabarda i Balkariia v XVIII veke*, 52.

¹⁴⁶ See for example John Robert McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For a broader history on the impact of plague on human history see William Hardy McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1976).

¹⁴⁷ Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

in the early nineteenth century does fit a global pattern of imperial expansion facilitated by disease, at work since the at least the dawn of the early-modern period.¹⁴⁸

In an ironic twist, Begeulov offers an alternative view of the effects of plague on Russian control. According this view, in the short term, plague may have prolonged Kabarda's de-facto independence and facilitated its continuing influence over its neighbors. During the epidemic, Russia used the Caucasus Fortification Line as a cordon sanitaire between Russian (Cossack) territories and native districts after the plague reached the Russian fortress town of Georgievsk.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, the tsarist administration declared a state of emergency in Kabarda in 1804 and Kabardians could not cross over the Russian lines.¹⁵⁰ With communication between the tsarist administration and the native population becoming increasingly difficult as a result of this cordon, Russia was unable to provide assistance to mountaineer societies hoping to escape Kabardian dominance and settle lands behind Russian lines. Moreover, with the loss of access to Russian markets, trade relations between the mountaineer societies and Kabarda increased. Mountaineer economic dependence on Kabarda only increased during the plague years. Finally, the military-colonial administration dramatically curtailed the scope and frequency of their punitive expeditions to Kabarda and neighboring societies.¹⁵¹ These limitations that the plague, at its height, placed on the Russia's willingness to send large numbers of troops into Kabarda, may also explain why

¹⁴⁸ S. J. Watts, *Epidemics and History: Disease, Power, and Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

¹⁴⁹ Begeulov, 209.

¹⁵⁰ Berozov, 5.

¹⁵¹ Begeulov, 60, 171, 209.

Bulgakov's expedition, conducted in 1810 with the plague on the decline, was more devastating than that of Glazenap's in 1804.

The economic consequences of the plague—some direct effects of the plague and others the result of how Russia responded to the plague—were incredibly wide reaching. As mentioned, the cordon cut off Kabardian and mountaineer access to the important Russian market-towns along the Caucasus Line. More importantly, Russia's cordon also restricted the Kabardians' access to vital pasturage, croplands, and salt lakes beyond the Russian lines. The loss of these vital economic resources only compounded the effects of the plague and led to greater desperation on the part of a population resisting Russian rule.¹⁵² On the most basic level, the plague depleted Kabarda's able-bodied population and decimated its labor force.¹⁵³

The plague led to major changes to the region's "ethnic" frontiers by depopulating huge swaths of Kabarda. While the plague affected all of Kabarda, Lesser Kabarda suffered the most from the epidemic because the spring and summer brought malaria outbreaks.¹⁵⁴ According to one visitor's account, "the extraordinary disaster that struck Lesser Kabarda in the form of infectious disease brought it into the abyss of misery. The majority of its residents died off, most of the rest dissipated into neighboring areas, while the smallest share of them remained in their miserable hovels. The fields and the vineyards remained unworked and the villages lay empty"¹⁵⁵ The frontiers of this part of Kabarda had already contracted during mid-eighteenth century, when Ingush migrations

¹⁵² Kabardian appeals for access to this land and Russia's refusal are discussed at great length in *AKAK, Tom IV*. See, especially, 845-49.

¹⁵³ Begeulov, 193-94.

¹⁵⁴ Kuz'minov, "Etnodemograficheskaia karta narodov Tereka," 751.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Berozov, 51.

forced Lesser Kabarda's princes to move their domains to the northwest, away from the Sunzha basin.¹⁵⁶ With the decline of Lesser Kabarda's princes in the eighteenth century, well-to-do Ossetians traded slaves for land from Kabardian princes and formed small settlements in the foothills near the entrances to their valleys.¹⁵⁷ This earlier, pre-plague shift in settlement marked the beginning of the end of Kabardian power over Ossetian societies. However, at the turn of the nineteenth century, Ossetians had not yet settled the Terek plains—Lesser Kabarda's elites still precariously controlled this land. The plague and resultant depopulation in the early nineteenth century caused the further contraction of Lesser Kabarda's frontiers. By 1810 the plague in Lesser Kabarda had depopulated much of the right-bank of the Terek basin up to the Kurp River. Between 1810 and 1815, the tsarist administration, now controlling these lands, began to resettle landless Ossetians to the now largely depopulated areas of what had been the heart of Lesser Kabarda.¹⁵⁸ Only during the final conquest of Kabarda, between 1818 and 1825, did the tsarist government begin actively promoting Ossetian colonization of this territory.

Ermolov and the Final Conquest of Kabarda: 1818-1825

The final conquest of Kabarda came between 1818 and 1825 at the hands of Aleksei Ermolov, the tsarist general and proconsul of the Caucasus infamous for his exceptionally cruel tactics of colonial warfare and disdain for the region's indigenous societies.

Ermolov achieved his conquest by brute, uncompromising force, compulsory

¹⁵⁶ Volkova, 53; Kozhev, 29.

¹⁵⁷ Berozov, 41-43; Marzoev, 102.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

resettlement, and by surrounding Kabarda's villages with lines of Cossack forts and block posts. These tactics isolated Kabardians from most of their neighbors, ending central Caucasia's Kabarda-centered system of inter-communal relations, and prevented groups of "unpacified" Kabardians from absconding to the mountains.

After Russia's victory over Napoleon in 1815, Tsar Alexander I once again turned his attention to pacifying Russia's most volatile borderland and expanding Russia's empire into Transcaucasia (the Georgian, Armenian, and Azeri lands). To accomplish this task, Alexander turned to General Ermolov, a hero of the Napoleonic Wars with a reputation for bravery and independent-mindedness. Ermolov also exhibited a willingness to employ violence, fear, and intimidation in pursuit of Russia's interests.¹⁵⁹ A product of the Enlightenment, Ermolov had an intense disdain for the "irrational Asiatics" of Caucasia typical for men of his milieu. He believed that the only language that native populations of Caucasia understood was that of brute force and that Russia's only hope of introducing order was through despotic rule, which he believed was inherent to "Asiatic" societies. Ermolov adopted the persona of an "oriental despot"—he kept a harem, claimed descent from Chinggis Khan, and ruthlessly punished all who disobeyed.¹⁶⁰ In some parts of Caucasia, such as Kabarda, Ermolov's policies were a glowing success for Russia because they ended native resistance; in others areas, such as Chechnya, they provoked the native population into a long and bloody war of resistance against tsarist rule.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ For an insightful analysis of Ermolov see Khordarkovsky, *Bitter Choices*, 66-81.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

In 1816, General Aleksei Ermolov arrived in Tiflis to take up the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasus forces. From this position he began his infamously brutal “pacification” campaign against the mountaineers of the North Caucasus. Backed by an expanded military force of up to 50,000 soldiers, Ermolov’s tactics included the destruction of rebellious auls (villages), resettlement and concentration of pacified auls to the plains, the encirclement of auls by new fortification lines of Cossack settlements, and scorched-earth policies that left large swaths of the northeast Caucasus deforested.¹⁶² If the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca ended Kabarda’s de jure independence, by 1825 Ermolov’s policies ended Kabarda’s de facto independence.¹⁶³

Ermolov established five main fortresses (Baksan, Chegem, Nalchik, Cherek, and Uruk) in a line across Kabarda at the entrances to the mountain valleys. Ermolov also installed numerous other smaller outposts at strategic locations. Nalchik became the center of Russian power in Kabarda.¹⁶⁴ By covering Kabarda with military fortresses and outposts, which encircled the Kabardians within a much smaller territory, Ermolov achieved two import objectives: he weakened Kabarda’s access to and relations with its neighbors and inhibited the ability of restive Kabardian elites to provision themselves in the mountains. Ermolov saw the attainment of these objectives as essential to the “pacification” of Kabarda.

The line of fortresses and outposts running across Kabarda—the Kabardian Line, as it became known—cut Kabardian shepherds off from important summer mountain

¹⁶² A. L. Narochitskii ed. *Istoriia narodov Severnogo kavkaza, Tom II* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), 30-35.

¹⁶³ Kh. M. Dumanov, “Zemlevladienie i zemel’no-ierarkhicheskoe pravo v Kabarde v pervoi polovine XIX v.” “Zemlevladienie i zemel’no-ierarkhicheskoe pravo v Kabarde v pervoi polovine XIX v.,” in *Aktual’nye problemy feodal’noi Kabardy i Balkarii*, ed. K. F. Dzamikhov (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1992), 115-16.

¹⁶⁴ Begeulov, 220.

pastures. Moreover, the Line impeded Kabardians' direct access to their mountaineer neighbors, ending their elites' political influence over most neighboring communities. This attempt to prevent restive Kabardians from using the mountains to their advantage lay at the heart of Ermolov's plans. If prior to Ermolov, the colonial administration sporadically sent Russian forces into Kabarda to put down insurrections in the mountains, only to return them to the Caucasus Line afterwards and leave "pacified" auls in place, Ermolov established a permanent Russian military presence in Kabarda. Ermolov resettled Kabardian auls that submitted to Russian rule within this circle of Russian military fortifications.¹⁶⁵ For example, Ermolov resettled eighteen auls from the left-bank of the Malka River around Piatigor'e.¹⁶⁶ Since tsarist diplomats and generals had solidified Russia's hold on this frontier region of Piatigor'e—thanks in no small part to the settlement of Kabardians to this region in the 1780s—the Kabardian presence among the Cossack military population of the Caucasus Line became more of a security threat than an asset for Russia. This fortified line blockaded "unpacified" (*nemirnye*) Kabardians still in the mountains from their essential economic resources in the foothills and plains and prevented them from obtaining weapons from their neighbors. According to Ermolov, "without farmland and pasturage for their cattle to spend winter during periods of intense cold, [Kabardians] will have nothing left to do but submit to Russian power."¹⁶⁷ Ermolov's goal here was to disrupt pre-existing land use structures and economic practices in order to force the Kabardians into submission. Moreover, this

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 232.

¹⁶⁶ Kh. M. Dumanov ed., *Territorii i rasselenie kabardinstev i balkartsev* (Nalchik: Nart, 1993), 33-81.

¹⁶⁷ Idem, "Zemlevladienie i zemel'no-ierarkhicheskoe pravo," 115-16.

enforced isolation of the mountains of Kabarda (Balkaria) prevented rebellious Kabardians from linking up forces with “unpacified” Chechen and Ingush communities to the east and western Circassians across the Kuban. Indeed, Kabarda’s elites only retained their tributary relations with the numerically small mountaineer societies of Urusbi, Chegem, Khulam, Bezengi, and Balkar closest to Kabarda (i.e. the Balkars).

The period, in the late 1820s and 1830s, immediately following the conquest of Kabarda, marked the transformation of the Lesser-Kabardian plains into the Ossetian plains. Ermolov’s policies led to a shift in the cultural-linguistic frontiers of the central Caucasus. In plagued-ravished eastern (Lesser) Kabarda, Ermolov resettled the surviving Kabardian population, scattered among ghost-villages in the Terek basin, westward onto several compact villages, closer to the fortresses of the Caucasus Line. With this resettlement, the majority of land formerly belonging to the princes and nobles of Lesser Kabarda transferred to the state land fund. In an effort to attract Ossetian support and to further weaken ties between Ossetian mountaineers and Kabardian elites, Ermolov immediately charged colonel Skvortsov with resettling land-hungry Ossetians of the Digora, Alagir, Kurtat, and Tagaur mountaineer societies to this plains land.¹⁶⁸ As with Kabardian villages, the Russian military administration placed military fortifications and Cossack settlements next to these new Ossetian villages in order to establish control over them.¹⁶⁹ The Russian military presence in the form of Cossack *stanitsy* would also deter Kabardian incursions into these lands. Indeed, Ermolov’s instructions to Skvortsov stipulated that “Ossetians resettling from the mountains as Russian subjects should be

¹⁶⁸ Volkova, 140.

¹⁶⁹ Begeulov, 227.

fully protected from any intrusions from outside peoples.” Ermolov specifically noted that the Ossetians who resettle would not pay Kabardians for the land.¹⁷⁰

Tsarist population politics of resettlement caused inter-communal conflict between Kabardian elites and Ossetian mountaineers. In particular, cattle thieving and the burning of crop fields accompanied this mass Ossetian settlement of plains land previously under the control of Kabardian feudal lords.¹⁷¹ However, the weakness of the Kabardian elites after the dual catastrophes military conquest and plague limited the scope of such inter-communal conflict. Neither Kabarda’s princes and nobles nor the Kabardian peasantry who were also losing their land were in a position to contest Ossetian peasant colonization of the plains, especially given the support these Ossetians received from the Russian military.

The Russian administration also tried to deconstruct the Kabarda-centered socio-economic and inter-communal relationships that had predominated in the central Caucasus for centuries by ending the fictive kinship ties between the region’s elite families. For example, in August 1822 Ermolov issued a proclamation prohibiting *atalyk* between Kabardian and non-Kabardian families. This proclamation indicates a premeditated tsarist policy aimed at curbing Kabarda’s influence over neighboring communities.¹⁷² This decision was partly motivated by Ermolov’s awareness that the “Kabardians...sent their sons to the [Circassian] tribes across the Kuban, from where, after growing up, they returned to Kabarda with a harsh and irreconcilable hatred toward

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in Volkova, 140.

¹⁷¹ Begeulov, 237.

¹⁷² M. I. Barazbiev, “Traditsionnye formy mezhetnicheskikh otnoshenii balkartsev i karachaevtsev s kabardintami,” *Respublika: Al'manakh sotsial'no-politicheskikh i pravovikh issledovaniy*, no. 1 (2000): 48-71.

Christian Russia.”¹⁷³ More generally, Ermolov saw *atalyk* as important link in the relationship between Kabarda and its neighbors. Ermolov’s efforts at banning *atalyk* in Kabarda between members of different cultural-linguistic communities, however, were not always successful. Moreover, Ermolov’s attempts to enlist the forces of Kabarda’s neighbors in tsarist battles with rebellious Kabardians often came to naught.

General Ermolov used extreme force and violence to intimidate the Kabardians into submission. He resorted to these tactics because he perceived Kabardians as almost universally disloyal. He also believed, as did many other Russian officials, that an overwhelming culture of violence existed among the indigenous peoples of the North Caucasus—he thought that Caucasians only really understood violence as a tool of persuasion and communication. Ermolov intensified the policy of destroying rebellious auls by extending it to those that housed fugitives or aided the rebels in any way. The destruction of the mixed Kabardian and Abaza aul of Tramovo in May 1818 was the most infamous example of Ermolov’s brutality in Kabarda. Residents of Tramovo, located in the Piatigor’e area near the fortress Konstantinogorsk, gave shelter to fugitives and allowed a band of Kabardian rebels to pass through their aul. In response, Ermolov ordered the “pacified” aul of Tramovo, which he labeled “a den of thieves and eternal plague,” burnt to the ground.¹⁷⁴ Russian forces surrounded the village in the middle of the night and ordered its residents to disperse. Cossacks and regular soldiers set the village ablaze from four sides. Given the straw-and-wood construction of the Kabardian dwellings, the fires quickly engulfed the entire village. Cossacks looted as much of the

¹⁷³ Quoted in Beituganov, *Ermolov i Kabarda*. 60.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 56.

villagers' property as possible before it was all destroyed. The military command gave the village's cattle and horses to the neighboring Russian soldiers and families of the Caucasus Line. The soldiers did not permit residents to bring any of their property with them.¹⁷⁵ Ermolov hoped that the destruction of Tramovo would serve as an example for other Kabardian auls that gave shelter to anti-Russian elements.¹⁷⁶

In 1822, Ermolov eliminated the last vestiges of Kabarda's autonomy when he abolished both the position of Grand Prince of Kabarda and the *Mekhkeme* (*sharia* courts). Ermolov replaced these institutions with the Kabardian Provisional Court (*Kabardinskii vremennyi sud*) as the main legal structure for Kabarda. Despite its name, the Provisional Court, which adjudicated cases according to local traditions until 1858, proved rather more permanent.¹⁷⁷ These administrative changes provoked two last desperate uprisings in Kabarda in 1822 and 1825.¹⁷⁸ By the late 1820s Ermolov's plans had succeeded in Kabarda; those Kabardian nobles who refused to submit to tsarist rule had either died in battle or fled with their vassals and serfs to the rebellious tribes across the Kuban. Using the affinities between the Russian and Kabardian social structure to its advantage (something that was more difficult to do with the "tribal" societies elsewhere

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Begeulov, 225.

¹⁷⁷ In addition to oral traditions, the Kabardian Provisional Court based its rulings on two documents from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: "The Decrees on the Estate in Kabarda," which was adopted by the Kabarda's *Khasa* (a type of legislature) in 1785, and the "People's Condition" of 1807. Iakub Shardanov, the Court's long-serving secretary, collected these documents and other information about customary law or *khabze* during the 1820s and 1830s. The first full collection of Kabardian customary law "The Decrees on the Estates in Kabarda," a reified version of customary law, though compiled by Iakub Shardanov, was never officially adopted as a codified compendium. See Ia.M. Shardanov, "O znachenie drevnogo kabardinskogo obriada" in *Materialy Ia.M. Shardanova po obychnomu pravu kabardintsev pervoi poloviny XIX veka*, ed. Kh.M. Dumanov (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1986), 283-318.

¹⁷⁸ See, Kalmykov, *Integratsiia Kabardy i Balkarii*.

in the North Caucasus), the tsarist state co-opted the rest of the nobility into the tsarist state's service-nobility system, with the majority of the Kabardian nobles becoming officers in the tsarist military.¹⁷⁹

The Central Caucasus after Ermolov

The half century between Russia's formal annexation of Kabarda and Ermolov's final conquest of the region in the 1820s witnessed a fundamental transformation of the system of inter-communal relations in the central Caucasus. In the 1770s Kabarda was the region's dominant polity and neighboring mountaineer peoples still relied on Kabarda for protection, pasturage, grain, and access to Russia and its markets. By the 1820s a Russia-centered system of inter-communal relations replaced this Kabarda-centered one. Most peoples of the region now looked to Russia to provide protection from external enemies (often Kabardian princes), access to farmland and pasturage, and entry to regional markets. Those who refused these changes fled to the still independent societies across the Kuban or joined the Islamic resistance in Chechnya and Dagestan in the northeast. In addition to religion, this transformation was largely tied to ethno-demographic and ethno-territorial changes caused by a combination of Russian colonialism, disease, and land pressures among the mountaineers. Whatever the relative importance of each of these factors, it is clear that the tsarist state played no small role in these transformations;

¹⁷⁹ For a discussion of tsarist strategies for colonial control and the position of native elites in the service of the tsar see Michael Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices: Loyalty and Betrayal in the Russian Conquest of the North Caucasus*. (Ithaca, 2011) and Sean Pollock, "'As One Russian to Another': Prince Petr Ivanovich Bagration's Assimilation of Russian Ways," *Ab Imperio* no. 4 (2010): 113-42.

indeed, it pursued policies, cautiously at first, aimed at weakening Kabarda's influence while at strengthening its own.

Russia—usually personified in colonial administrators of the tsarist army—also became the arbiter of local disputes, often over land, between the peoples of the central Caucasus. Here the tsarist state took on a classic Russian-imperial role: referee.¹⁸⁰ This dynamic was spurred on as much by state officials trying to establish order as by those on the ground trying to gain an advantage (land and an end to tribute payments to Kabardian princes). In addition to using force and violence to fundamentally reconfigure the social, intra-communal, and economic structures of the region, by actively insinuating itself into local social and political dynamics, the tsarist state began to integrate the peoples of the central Caucasus into the administrative framework of the Empire. In seeking to benefit from the new opportunities that the tsarist state offered, mountaineers and Kabardians alike associated with tsarist officials, learned the complex administrative and bureaucratic protocols and administrative hierarchies of the tsarist colonial administration, and presented themselves as loyal subjects of the tsar.¹⁸¹

The collapse of the Kabarda-centered system of inter-communal relations was both destructive and creative. It destroyed old relationships and hierarchies. Contacts between the Kabardian elite and Ossetians, Ingush, Karachai mountaineer societies were no longer as intense or as frequent. The everyday lives of these societies no longer depended on Kabarda. It also created new relationships, hierarchies and enmities.

¹⁸⁰ I borrow here from Breyfogle's essay on the enduring characteristics of Russia's imperial space. See "Enduring Imperium," 74-76.

¹⁸¹ Begeulov, 238-39.

Cossack colonization accompanied Russian empire-building in the region.¹⁸² At first, Cossacks and mountaineers occupied separate but neighboring spheres, and relations between the two groups were largely complimentary and symbiotic, if often violent. A clear example of the “creative” aspects of Russian imperialism,¹⁸³ Cossack culture and society in the Terek became a hybrid of East Slavic and indigenous Caucasian influences.¹⁸⁴ However, as intensified Cossack settlement deprived native communities of scarce land in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, relations between Cossacks and natives worsened but varied by community. The demographic losses suffered by Kabarda left its remaining population relatively well-supplied with land; consequently, Kabardians and Cossack communities rarely came into direct conflict over land. In contrast, Ossetian, Ingush, and Chechen communities, suffering acute land shortages, did enter into sharp land conflict with Cossacks. The tsarist administration scattered Cossack *stanitsy* among the Ossetian and Ingush communities that resettled to the former plains lands of Lesser Kabarda in the early nineteenth century. Conflict between Cossacks and mountaineers in this area would only increase as the nineteenth century wore on and a cycle of raiding, involving cattle and horse thieving, developed between the two sides.¹⁸⁵ Divergent economic practices—the Cossacks were agriculturalists (albeit often unsuccessful ones) and the mountaineers were cattle-breeders—contributed to these conflicts. Mountaineers grazing cattle on Cossack

¹⁸² On the Terek Cossacks see Thomas Barrett, *At the Edge of Empire* and D. I. Savchenko *Terskoe kazachestvo v istorii prisoedineniia Severnogo Kavkaza k Rossii: XVI-XIX vv.* (Piatigorsk: Tekhnologicheskii universitet, 2005).

¹⁸³ Breyfogle, 52.

¹⁸⁴ Barrett, *At the Edge of Empire*, 6-7.

¹⁸⁵ Arapov et al., 70-72;

cropland became the cause of many disputes.¹⁸⁶ The demographic and territorial changes brought about by the collapse of the Kabarda-centered system also created new enmities among mountaineer communities. For example, during the early nineteenth century, Ossetian and Ingush communities increasingly came into conflict over lands in the foothills and plains.

By 1825, the imposition of Russian rule in the central Caucasus overturned long-established patterns of settlement and landownership and transformed the region's Kabarda-centered system of inter-communal relations. Russian conquest modified, but would never completely dismantle, this symbiotic system. Despite the mass colonization of much of the Lesser-Kabardian plains by Ingush mountaineers in the eighteenth century and Ossetian mountaineers in the first third of the nineteenth century, and the dramatic political, economic, and demographic weakening of Kabarda, Kabardian nobles still controlled lands needed by neighboring communities of transhumant stockbreeders. In particular, the small isolated mountaineer societies of the Cherek, Chegem, and Baksan valleys—known variously as Bassians, Mountain Tatars, and the five mountaineer societies of Kabarda and now known as the Balkars¹⁸⁷—remained locked in their valleys south of Kabarda and dependent upon Kabarda's plains pastures for their winter transhumance even after they swore allegiance to the tsar in 1827. The nature of Kabardino-Balkar relations would change along with the political situation in the region, and the end of feudalism and the collapse of the tsarist state decimated the elites of both

¹⁸⁶ Berozov, 112-15.

¹⁸⁷ Most frequently, however, before about the mid-nineteenth century, while recognizing the linguistic and cultural ties linking the different mountaineer societies, observers referred to the ancestors of today's Balkar as four or five distinct groups according to society (*el'*): Balkars, Chegems, Khulams, Bezengis, and Urusbiis.

Kabarda and Balkaria. Nonetheless, now 200 years later, the basic contours of the world created by Russia's conquest of Kabarda are still in place and Kabardians and Balkars remain tied together politically, economically, and culturally.

Chapter 2:

The Caucasian Wars and the Disorder of Inter-Communal Relations in the Central Caucasus, 1825-1861

This chapter examines the period between the conquest of Kabarda and the attempted integration of the communities of the North Caucasus into the administrative and economic structure of the empire after the Caucasian Wars. Wartime conditions in the northeast and northwest Caucasus prevented the tsarist state from stabilizing inter-communal relations and pursuing imperial integration in the central Caucasus. Rather, tsarist concern over on-going armed resistance to their rule in the northwest and northeast Caucasus led tsarist officials to undertake policies, such as deportation and resettlement, in the “pacified” central Caucasus that, while aimed at shoring up security in the short term, had the long-term effect of further destabilizing inter-communal relations and weakening social cohesion.¹ As was often the case with social-engineering projects both in Eurasia and globally, tsarist population politics—removing “pacified” mountaineers from strategic locations and settling “loyal” Cossacks in their place—had unintended and unwelcome consequences.² Such population politics, while perhaps increasing security in

¹ These connections between events in the northwest and northeast Caucasus, on the one hand, and tsarist policies in the central Caucasus, on the other, demonstrate the regional interconnectedness of the Russian Empire. This interconnectedness was an enduring aspect of Eurasian imperial space. See Breyfogle, 44.

² For a brief historiographical survey of this theme in Eurasian history, see *ibid.*, 72-73; For a global and comparative discussion of the perils of social-engineering see James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

the short term, led to a deep-seated mistrust of the government on the part of uprooted indigenous communities and increased animosity between resettled mountaineer communities, plains dwellers, and Cossacks who found themselves fighting for an ever-dwindling share of land.

On the most basic level, the settling of Cossacks on lands in the heart of Kabarda intensified relations between Kabardians and settlers (both Cossacks and retired soldiers from Russia and Ukraine). On the one hand, the intensification of Kabardian-settler relations meant an increase in cultural interactions—through the borrowing and adapting of aspects of each other’s material culture (housing, dress, cuisine) and agricultural practices—and economic interaction through trade (which would only continue to grow). On the other hand, settlement of formerly Kabardian lands meant an increase in inter-communal conflict between Kabardian peasants and Cossacks over land-use rights. However, in comparison to the Cossack-native violence going on at the time in Chechnya, Kabardino-Cossack relations were relatively amicable and subject to more legal disputes than fighting. To be sure, after violent military conquest and the ravages of plague, Kabarda’s remaining elites had little strength remaining with which to resist further Russian colonization. Whatever the reasons for Kabarda’s quietism, raids by Imam Shamil’s resistance forces were much more of a threat to the Cossacks of the Georgian Military Highway than disputes with their Kabardian neighbors.³

³ E.S. Tiutiunina also makes this case in *Grani regional'noi istorii XIX-XX vekov: mnogonatsional'naia Kabardino-Balkariia i ee sosedi (stat'i i dokumenty)* (Nalchik: Izdatel'stvo M. i V. Kotliarovykh, 2008), 38-41.

The land disputes of the 1840s and 1850s examined in this chapter taught the tsarist administration that it could not work within the existing system of land relations. By the mid-nineteenth century Russian colonization had undermined traditional land relations in Kabarda and replaced it with a hybrid system that tsarist officials did not fully understand. Given this lack of understanding, tsarist officials' attempts to make relatively small changes to this system of land relations and mediate problems within it opened up a floodgate of legal and administrative disputes over land rights.

Although Kabarda was now firmly under direct Russian political control, the state was unable to implement its colonial plans on Kabarda's territory—Slavic colonization, the expansion of surveillance over the native population, the creation a class of loyal private landowners, and the landed emancipation of Kabarda's serfs—without creating new problems and incurring significant administrative difficulties and expenditure. Perhaps more alarming, the state was unsuccessful in performing its essential function of administering the territory in way that it deemed efficient and rational.

This chapter also examines changes and continuities in inter-communal relations in the wake of the collapse of the Kabarda-centered system. For the mountaineer communities of the central Caucasus, the consequences of the demise of Kabarda's position of regional dominance differed depending on state policies, geographic conditions, and proximity to Kabardian lands, Russian forts, and strategic roads. The ways in which the communities of the central Caucasus renegotiated their relationships with each other during this period from the late 1820s to the early 1860s helped

determine the larger patterns of inter-communal relations that would characterize life in the region through the twentieth century.

This chapter examines these problems of imperial governance, land relations, and inter-communal conflict by examining four cases: the legal disputes and social upheaval caused by tsarist policies in Greater Kabarda's Anzorov domains; the inter-communal strife created by the resettlement of different communities to Lesser Kabarda; the five mountaineer societies' (i.e. Today's Balkars') attempts to use the window of opportunity created by the conquest of Kabarda to expand their land holdings; and the competition between Kabardian and Karachai shepherds over the summer mountain pastures.

The story of the Anzorovs, a high-noble Kabardian extended family torn apart and economically devastated by tsarist policies of Cossack colonization, is the primary case study of this chapter. The Anzorov case provides a window into problems of imperial integration, the role of native elites in imperial governance, and the effects of Russian conquest and colonization on inter-communal relations and indigenous social and legal structures and practices, particularly as they related to land use and ownership.

In particular, the Anzorov case demonstrates the destabilizing effect of Cossack colonization on Kabarda's system of land relations. By forcing the resettlement of Kabardian fiefdoms, the Cossack settlement of the Georgian Military Highway upset Kabarda's delicate balance in land relations. After tsarist conquest, the old and the new intermingled in Kabarda in a system of legal pluralism, as traditional family fiefdoms coexisted and overlapped with other types of landownership such as private property and

peasant communal ownership,⁴ based on, or at least influenced by, Russian legal practices.⁵ In Kabarda, as was often the case in other colonial situations, the colonized were often able use the legal pluralism created by the colonizers to their advantage.⁶ This mixing of landownership regimes created a situation characteristic of governance throughout much of the empire's non-Russian borderlands: a kind of organized chaos in land relations that was highly dependent on local practices and oral agreements for its functioning.⁷

The cases that this chapter examines convinced the administration of the need to clearly establish landownership and estate rights in the central Caucasus. In the 1840s and 1850s the tsarist administration created the first commissions to resolve the questions of

⁴ On the co-existence of old and new forms of landownership in Kabarda, see, V.Kh. Kazharov, "K voprosu o dualizme kabardinokoi sel'skoi obshchiny v predreformennyi period," in *Obshchestvennyi byt adygov i balkartsev*, ed. S.Kh. Mafedzev (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskii institut istorii, filologii i ekonomiki pri Sovete ministrov KBASSR, 1986), 22-45; Valerii Gardanov identified five forms of landownership that co-existed in Kabarda before the Great Reforms. See V.K. Gardanov, *Obshchestvennyi stroi adygsikh narodov (XVIII- pervaiia polovina XIX veka)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1967), 146-47.

⁵ Ekaterina Pravilova discusses a similar situation whereby opposing conceptions of landownership and use co-existed and competed. See her article on property law and Russian agrarian policies in Transcaucasia and Turkestan. "The Property of Empire: Islamic Law and Russian Agrarian Policy in Transcaucasia and Turkestan," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 2 (2011): 353-86.

⁶ For a comparative and global perspective on this topic see the essays in *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500-1850*, eds. Lauren Benton and Richard J. Ross (New York: New York University Press, 2013); There are many examples of discussions of the instrumentalization of pluralistic legal regimes in the Russian Empire. Robert Crews, for example, discusses how ordinary Muslims of the Russian empire ("lay activists") circumvented displeasing rulings of Muslim clerics by appealing to imperial legal institutions., *For Prophet and Tsar*, 24, 107-28; In her study of customary law and the integration of the Kazakhs into the Russian Empire, Virginia Martin examines "the active role that Middle Horde Kazakhs played in negotiating meanings of imperial laws and nomadic customs within their own community, and in creating new meanings to suit their diverse legal and political needs under changing socioeconomic circumstances." See Martin, *Law and Custom in the Steppe*, 3. The situation in Kabarda, in which Kabardian nobles utilized Russian concepts of private property (*sobstvennost'*) bears striking resemblances with the land situation in the Ottoman Empire during the Tanzimat reforms. See Huri Islamoglu, "Property as a Contested Domain: A Reevaluation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858," in *New Perspectives on Property and Land in the Middle East*, ed. Roger Owen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 28. The situation in Kabarda also resembles the way in which residents of the Batumi province rushed to their landholdings into private property. See Pravilova, 370.

⁷ Breyfogle, 64-65.

landownership arising from these disputes. While these commissions did not complete their task, they marked the beginning of a long-term land reform project in Kabarda and the central Caucasus generally. Many of the ideas that would guide the land reforms of the 1860s in the central Caucasus (examined in chapter three) came out of discussions on how to deal with the land disputes in Kabarda during the 1840s and 1850s.⁸

The Geo-Political Context

The final conquest of Kabarda achieved by general Ermolov at great human cost by 1825, came none too soon for Russia's colonial government, as major conflicts engulfed the rest of the North Caucasus soon thereafter. By the late-1820s, an anti-colonial resistance movement fueled by Naqshbandi Sufism erupted in highland Dagestan in the northeast Caucasus. With the rise of Imam Shamil as the movement's charismatic and capable leader in 1834, the Imamate quickly spread its influence throughout the rest of Dagestan and Chechnya. Shamil replaced local elites who had been amenable to cooperating with the Russians (for the right price) with rulers devoted or at least willing, often on threat of violence, to accept the tenets of his theocratic state.⁹

In the northwest Caucasus, clashes between Cossacks and Ottoman-backed Circassian and Nogai communities had been common since the establishment of Russian control over right-bank Kuban (i.e. the Kuban steppe) and the construction of the Kuban Line of fortresses at the close of the eighteenth century. The outbreak of another Russo-

⁸ P. Kuz'minov and B. Mal'bakhov, Introduction to *Narody Tsentral'nogo Kavkaza v 40-kh—nachale 60-kh godov XIX v.: sbornik dokumental'nykh material'ov v 2-kh tomakh* (Moscow: Pomatur, 2005), 8-10.

⁹ On Shamil, the role of Sufism in anti-Russian resistance, and the politics of his Imamate see Zelkina, *In Quest for God and Freedom* and Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar*; and Thomas Sanders, Ernest Tucker and Gary Hamburg eds., *Russian-Muslim Confrontation in the Caucasus*.

Ottoman war, in 1828, caused a spike in conflict in the northwest Caucasus. More importantly, the Treaty of Adrianople, marking Russia's victory the following year, ceded the Black Sea Coast along the shores of the northwest Caucasus to Russia. Arguing that the Adrianople Treaty gave Russia possession of all of northwestern Caucasia, Russia's military commanders launched a long war to impose its rule over the predominantly Circassian peoples of the left-bank Kuban (i.e. the mountain valleys and gorges along the upper-Kuban and its tributaries).¹⁰ Russia's armies would be bogged down in bloody fighting in the northwest and northeast Caucasus for over thirty years. The conquest of Kabarda, the lynchpin to the control of the central Caucasus, gave Russia a stable power base as it entered a period when the rest of the North Caucasus was ablaze with anti-colonial resistance.

Russia's policies toward Kabarda and its neighbors, in the period before the conclusion of the Russo-Caucasian Wars in 1859/64, were dictated by wartime exigencies and security concerns. In addition to being Russia's only strong-hold in the North Caucasus, Russia's only overland access to its Transcaucasian possessions—expanded to include most of contemporary Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia after the Treaties of Gulistan (1813), and Turkmenchay (1828), Adrianople (1829)—lay through the central Caucasus.¹¹

¹⁰ On the Russia's struggle to subdue native resistance in the northwest Caucasus see, for example, Henze, *Russia's Long Struggle to Subdue the Circassians*.

¹¹ Arsen Karov ed., *Administrativno-Territorial'nye preobrazovaniia v Kabardino-Balkarii: istoriia i sovremennost'* (Nalchik: El'-Fa, 2000), 14-15.

The Land Question after Ermolov

The land question, though transformed by the demise of the Kabarda-centered system of inter-communal relations in most parts of the central Caucasus, remained the chief concern of the region's peoples after 1825. In the short run, the conquest of Kabarda seemed to solve the land question for those mountaineer communities, especially the Ossetian societies, who were formerly confined to overpopulated and infertile mountain valleys and dependent on Kabarda's princes and nobles for seasonal access to plains pastures. While Ermolov's policies did end Kabarda's dominance over these mountaineer communities, resettlement to the Lesser Kabardian plains did not provide the type of permanent land stability that the mountaineers had hoped for. The military administration repeatedly resettled these new plains villages from one location to another to make room for additional military settlements.¹² With each resettlement these recently landless communities from the mountains found less land at their disposal in the plains and it became less clear which land was rightfully theirs. These continual land upheavals also engulfed the remaining Kabardian communities of Lesser Kabarda.¹³

Although significant depopulation negated many of the land pressures caused by its territorial losses, Kabarda faced a series of land problems after decades of conflict. First, the few Kabardian princes and nobles who came out of the 1820s still relatively strong began to seize, by force of arms, lands of weaker families or from family-lines that had died out or fled the region as a result of war and disease. Noble and princely family groups seized as much land as they could defend from their rivals and used the tsarist

¹² Ibid.

¹³ B. S. Beslaneev, *Malaia Kabarda (XIII—Nachalo XX Veka)* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1995), 88-97.

administration's ignorance of Kabardian landownership practices to gain legal confirmation of their property rights.¹⁴ Second, the tsarist administration frequently gifted lands in Kabarda to the most loyal members of the native Kabardian elite without regard to hereditary land rights.¹⁵ Third, the redirecting of the Georgian-Military Highway through Kabarda, farther away from the fighting in Chechnya, added new complexities to the land question in Kabarda by forcing Kabardian nobles to move their villages to make way for new Cossack fortified settlements.¹⁶ Fourth, the mountain pastures north of the Malka River (the trans-Malka pastures), vital to the health of Kabarda's cattle- and horse-breeding economy, remained outside of Kabardian control since Ermolov deported Kabardians from all lands north of the left-bank of the Malka and placed the pastures in the control of Cossack armies.¹⁷ Kabardians hinged their hopes for economic recovery on the reclamation of these pastures; however, as we will see, the Karachai community also had its eyes on these lands. Fifth, the five mountaineer societies (today's Balkars) to the south and southwest of Greater Kabarda, so isolated from the Russian administration by mountains and Kabardian fiefdoms, were unable to expand the land under their control during Ermolov's conquest of Kabarda. However, after the upheavals of Ermolov's reign in Kabarda, residents of the five mountaineer societies, long-standing vassals of Kabarda's upper estates, seized the moment and stopped paying Kabardians lords for the use of their plains pastures. As the Kabardian nobility slowly, though never fully, recovered after 1825, the mountaineers' refusal to pay for the use of these lands became

¹⁴ Kумыков, *Ekonomicheskoe i kul'turnoe razvitiie Kabardy i Balkarii*, 41.

¹⁵ Vladimir Kudashev, *Istoricheskie svedeniia o kabardinskom narode* (1913, Nalchik: El'brus, 1991), 135.

¹⁶ Tiutiunina, 24-41.

¹⁷ Mesiats, 139-44.

an additional source of tension among Kabardian and mountaineer elites and a source of administrative confusion for local tsarist officials.¹⁸ With the conclusion of the Caucasian Wars in the 1860s, the Russian administration would attempt to solve these mounting land problems as part of its larger efforts to extend the Peasant Reforms (e.g. the abolition of serfdom) to the diverse societies of the North Caucasus.

Cossack Colonization and Inter-Communal Relations

The expansion of the size of the Cossack population in the central Caucasus during the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries had a transformative effect on inter-communal relations. In many parts of the Caucasus, Cossack colonization increased inter-communal tensions over land and led to elevated conflict. In the case of Kabarda, however, after an initial period of conflict, by the 1830s Cossack-Kabardian relations stabilized around an economic symbiosis based on relative abundant supply of land for both communities. Nevertheless, even in the relatively peaceful Kabardian lands, as the Anzorov case will demonstrate, Cossack colonization produced bitter disputes over landownership rights.

The colonization of Kabarda by mainly Slavic (Russian and Ukrainian) Cossacks accompanied the extension of tsarist control in the North Caucasus during the late-eighteen and early-nineteenth centuries.¹⁹ Instrumental in facilitating the first trade and

¹⁸ E.G. Muratova, *Sotsial'no-politicheskaia istoriia Balkarii XVII-nachala XX v.* (Nalchik: El'Fa, 2007), 173-75.

¹⁹ The Terek Cossacks incorporated significant numbers of Caucasian mountaineers, among other groups, into their ranks. Barrett, *At the Edge of Empire*, 30-42. To cite an example from the vicinity of Kabarda, the mixed Abaza-Kabardian aul of Babukovo, which was situated on the Caucasus line and was not resettled, was incorporated into the jurisdiction of the Georgievsk Cossacks of the Terek Cossack Host. In 1821, by

military contacts between Muscovite Russia and the peoples of the North Caucasus, Cossack communities had resided in the North Caucasus since at least the mid-sixteenth century. The Greben Cossacks, inhabiting areas near the confluence of the Sunzha and Terek rivers across from Chechen and Ingush auls, were composed of a diverse array of runaway Russian serfs, members of other Cossack armies who had resettled farther south, and native mountaineers. Though representing Russia's economic and political interests in the northeast Caucasus, the Greben Cossacks remained independent of the tsarist state until they were accorded state salaries and formally incorporated into the tsarist military structure in the early eighteenth century. These Cossack communities retained much their local autonomy well into the nineteenth century.²⁰ Moreover, the frontiers between the Cossacks and mountaineers remained porous and populations flowed freely between the two sides, resulting in a hybrid culture whereby, in the words of Thomas Barrett, "the North Caucasus was pulled into the empire, but at the same time the Terek Cossacks were pulled into the North Caucasus."²¹ Despite close trade relations and the extensive cultural

order of Ermolov, the aul Babukovo was transformed into the *stanitsa* Babukovskaia and its residents formed "a permanent division, numbering 100 sabres, subordinate to the commander of the Volga Cossack Brigade." In 1822, at the order of Ermolov, the residents of the aul who did not wish to enter the Cossack estate were directed to "resettle to Kabarda." See Beituganov, *Ermolov v Kabarde*, 93-94. Babukovskaia gets brief mention in Barrett, *At the Edge of Empire*, 41. Moreover, given the disproportionate number of men in Cossack *stanitsy*, marriage or at least sexual relations and procreation with mountaineer women was not uncommon. On familial ties between Cossacks and mountaineers in the content of Kabarda see R. N. Dzagov, *Vziamodeistvie kul'tur v protsesse formirovaniia mnogonatsional'nogo naseleniia Kabardy*. (Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkarskii institut gumanitarnykh issledovaniia 2009), 31; and N.V. Ivanova, "O nekotorykh problemakh mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii i vziimovliianie kul'tur avtokhtonnoho naseleniia Kabardino-Balkarii," *Res Publica : al'manakh sotsial'no-politicheskikh i pravovykh issledovaniia* no. 2 (2002): 73-79.

²⁰ For a history of the Terek Cossacks see Barrett, *At the Edge of Empire*. More background on the Cossacks can be found in Shane O'Rourke, *The Cossacks* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007); and Brian Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries: Cossack Communities and Empire-Building in the Age of Peter the Great* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²¹ Barrett, *At the Edge of Empire*, 6.

mixing characteristic of the creative forces of Russian imperialism,²² in most parts of the Terek valley relations between Cossacks and *gortsy* were most frequently characterized by military conflict. Both sides competed for pasturage along the Terek—a region where mountain Chechens were resettling at the same time as Cossacks were establishing their *stanitsy*—a cycle of raiding, involving cattle and horse thieving, developed between the two sides.²³ Aside from trade relations, Kabarda, by contrast, remained relatively unaffected by the Cossack presence until the establishment of the first Cossack *stanitsy* on Kabardian territory in the late eighteenth century.

From the founding of Mozdok in 1763 to the construction of the Kabardian Line in 1820, the lines of Cossack and Russian military colonization around Kabarda encompassed its contracting northern frontier. In 1770, the Caucasus military administration established the *stanitsa* Lukovskaia by resettling 100 Don Cossack families three miles upstream from Mozdok to service the fortress' cannons.²⁴ In 1777 one hundred Volga Cossack families resettled to lands along the confluence of the Terek and Malka, forming the *stanitsa* Ekaterininskaia (Ekaterinogradskaia) as part of the extension of Cossack fortification line westward from Mozdok along what became Kabarda's northern frontier. Ekaterininskaia was the first Cossack settlement within the borders of contemporary Kabardino-Balkaria. The other Cossack settlements established in the late 1770s along the Kabardian frontier of the Mozdok-Avoz Line were Pavlovskaia,

²² Breyfogle, 52-53.

²³ Arapov et al., 70-72.

²⁴ Feliks Kireev, "Lukovskaia—slavnaia liud'mi i delami kazach'ia stanitsa," *Osetiia-Kvaisa*, July 19, 2010.

Mar'inskaia, and Georgievskaiia.²⁵ In 1780, General Jacobi reinforced the central sector of the Azov-Mozdok Line, closest to Kabarda, with the construction of the fortress Konstantinogorskaia in the area of Piatigor'e. By the mid-1780s, Russian colonization in the region increased when the tsarist government began to encourage the settlement of the Azov-Mozdok Line by state peasants and Ukrainian *odnodvortsy* (yeomen). During this period, state peasants and retired soldiers established the settlements (later transformed into Cossack *stanitsy*) Prokhladnoe (1784), Soldatskoe (1786) and Priblizhnoe (1786).²⁶

The first decade of the nineteenth century witnessed intensified Russian colonization of the mineral-waters area around Piatigor'e after Tsar Alexander I's 1803 rescript "On the Recognition of the State Significance of the Caucasus Mineral Waters and the Necessity of Settling Them."²⁷ This proclamation opened the region up to the development of health spas and European colonization. Scottish and German missionaries established colonies—Karras (1803) and Nikolaevskaia (1819)—among the Kabardian and Abaza *auls* of Piatigor'e.²⁸ Finally, in the same 1803 rescript, Alexander called for the construction of a fortress in the place "where bitter waters [*kislye vody*] near the Caucasus mountains are located."²⁹ This fortress, Kislovodskaia (present-day Kislovodsk), which blocked off Kabardians' access to the Kuban region, sparked a mass

²⁵ V. M. Kabuzan, *Naselenie Severnogo Kavkaza v XIX-XX vekakh: Etnostatisticheskoe issledovanie* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo "Russko-Baltiiskii informatsionnyi tsentr BLITS", 1996), 30.

²⁶ For a history of Cossack settlement of Kabarda see I. Kh. Tkhamokova, *Russkoe i ukrainskoe naselenie Kabardino-Balkarii* (Nalchik: El'Fa, 2000).

²⁷ Tat'iana Makarova, "Gorod-kurort Kislovodsk vedet otchet svoei istorii s 1803 goda," *Stavropol'skaia Pravda*, May 8, 2013.

²⁸ Klaproth, 252.

²⁹ Makarova.

uprising in 1804. In 1814, on the eve of Ermolov's conquest, the male population of the Azov-Mozdok Line along the frontiers of Kabarda numbered 14,814.³⁰

As we have seen, by cutting off or limiting Kabardians' access to vital pastures and farmland north of the Terek and Malka, these Cossack settlements were the impetus for a series of Kabardian uprisings in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These settlers were supposed to secure the North Caucasus for the tsarist empire and bring "civilization" to the mountaineer peoples of the region. The harsh realities of life on this restive frontier, from frequent Kabardian raids to the difficulties of agriculture in a natural environment so different from that of central Russia, the latter being a common problem for Russian colonizers throughout the vast southern steppes,³¹ meant that these Russian and Ukrainian settlers were more frequently on the defensive or learning from the local economic practices of their native neighbors.³² Compared to the mid-nineteenth century, however, contacts between Cossacks and Kabardians were limited given the quarantine separating the Caucasus Line and the auls of Kabarda during the years of plague in the early-nineteenth century. In ordinary years, for a Kabardian to cross the Line, he (and they were most often men) needed to obtain a pass from the military administration and go through defumigation. During epidemic years, the trading posts and towns were closed off to native populations from infected areas.³³

³⁰ Kabuzan, 47.

³¹ See David Moon, *The Plough that Broke the Steppes: Agriculture and Environment on Russia's Grasslands, 1700-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

³² On cultural-economic exchanges between Kabardians and Cossacks, especially in terms of agricultural practices, see Dzagov, 75-84.

³³ Efrimenko et al., 30.

Cossack colonization of Kabarda significantly increased during Ermolov's conquest of Kabarda. Indeed, by encircling the Kabardian population within fortified lines of Cossack settlement, colonization was one of the keys to the success of Ermolov's plan. In 1822, Ermolov ordered the construction of the forts Chereksoe, Chegemskoe, Mechetskoe, Urukhscoe, Baksanskoe, Urvanskoe, and Nalchikskoe (Nalchik) at the entrance to all of Kabarda's river valleys leading up to the mountains. This string of fortresses, known as the Kabardian Line, was the first concentration of Cossack settlement within (rather than along) Kabarda.³⁴ Ermolov also established the Kislovodsk Line—a series of outposts between Kislovodsk on the Kuma and Kammenomostkaia on the Malka on the (trans-Malka) mountain pastures along the frontier between Kabarda, Karachai, and the Kuban Circassians.³⁵ The Kabardian and Kislovodsk lines connected the Kuban region west of Kabarda with Vladikavkaz, the main fortress of the Georgian Military Highway to the east. Moreover, with the establishment of Nalchik, the largest of the fortresses, in the heart of Greater Kabarda in 1822, the tsarist administration of Kabarda was, for the first time, located inside Kabarda. By 1825, about 2,500 Russian soldiers and Cossacks had permanently settled in the fortresses of the Kabardian line.³⁶ This number does not include those residing on the Azov-Mozdok and Kislovodsk Lines, which delimited the northern and northwestern frontiers of Kabarda.

³⁴ Tkhamokova, *Russkoe i ukrainskoe naselenie Kabardino-Balkarii*, 27-28.

³⁵ A.S. Dzagalov, "Ukreplenie i kazach'i stanitsy Tsentra Kavkazskoi linii i Vladikavkazskogo voennogo okruga v 30-40-kh godakh XIX v.," *Arkhivy i obshchestvo*, no. 11 (2009): 124.

³⁶ Tkhamokova, *Russkoe i ukrainskoe naselenie Kabardino-Balkarii*, 29.

Cossack colonization of Kabarda continued in the 1830s with the establishment of military settlements and *stanitsy* along the Georgian Military Highway in Kabarda.³⁷ By the mid-1830s, with active military operations in Kabarda concluded, the Caucasus military command launched an earlier plan of Ermolov's to redirect the Georgian Military Highway, connecting tsarist Russia with its imperial domains south of the Caucasus, through Kabarda along the left bank of the Terek. One of the reasons for this new route for the Georgian Military Highway was that it would separate Greater Kabarda from Lesser Kabarda and further isolate Kabarda from Ossetia.³⁸ This isolation was a policy priority because the tsarist administration wanted to prevent a renewal of Kabardian dominance over Ossetian societies (or at least weaken remaining Kabardino-Ossetian ties) and preclude the possibility of the two communities (Kabardians and Ossetians) from combining forces in future outbreaks of resistance. Finally, the colonial administration shored up the defenses of the Georgian Military Highway in Kabarda by establishing several *stanitsy* and military settlements for retired soldiers at the sites of former outposts of the Kabardian Line on the Terek: Prishibskaia, Aleksandrovscoe, Kotliarevskoe, and Urukhskaia.³⁹ Approximately 400 military families had moved to these four new settlements by the end of the 1830s.⁴⁰ In the minds of tsarist administrators, these Slavic settlers would also help bring Russian culture to Kabarda.

³⁷ *AKAK, Tom IX*, 281.

³⁸ *AKAK, Tom VI*, 508-09.

³⁹ The new route continued along the Terek into Ossetian populated lands. Cossack *stanitsy* were erected along this portion of the Georgian Military Highway as well: Nikolaevskaia, Ardonskaia, and Arkhonskaia. "1846 g. aprel'. Vedomost' o zemliakh, otoshedshikh ot kabardinskikh vladel'tsev pod voennye poseleniia na Voenno-Gruzinskoi doroge," in *Dokumenty po istorii adygov 20-50-kh godov XIX v.*, ed. Z.M. Kesheva (Nalchik: Institut gumanitarnykh issledovaniĭ, 2011), 118-20.

⁴⁰ Tiutiunina, 29-31.

While the spread of Russian culture through peasant colonization may well have been the long-term result of these new settlements, in the short term, they wreaked havoc upon land relations in Kabarda.

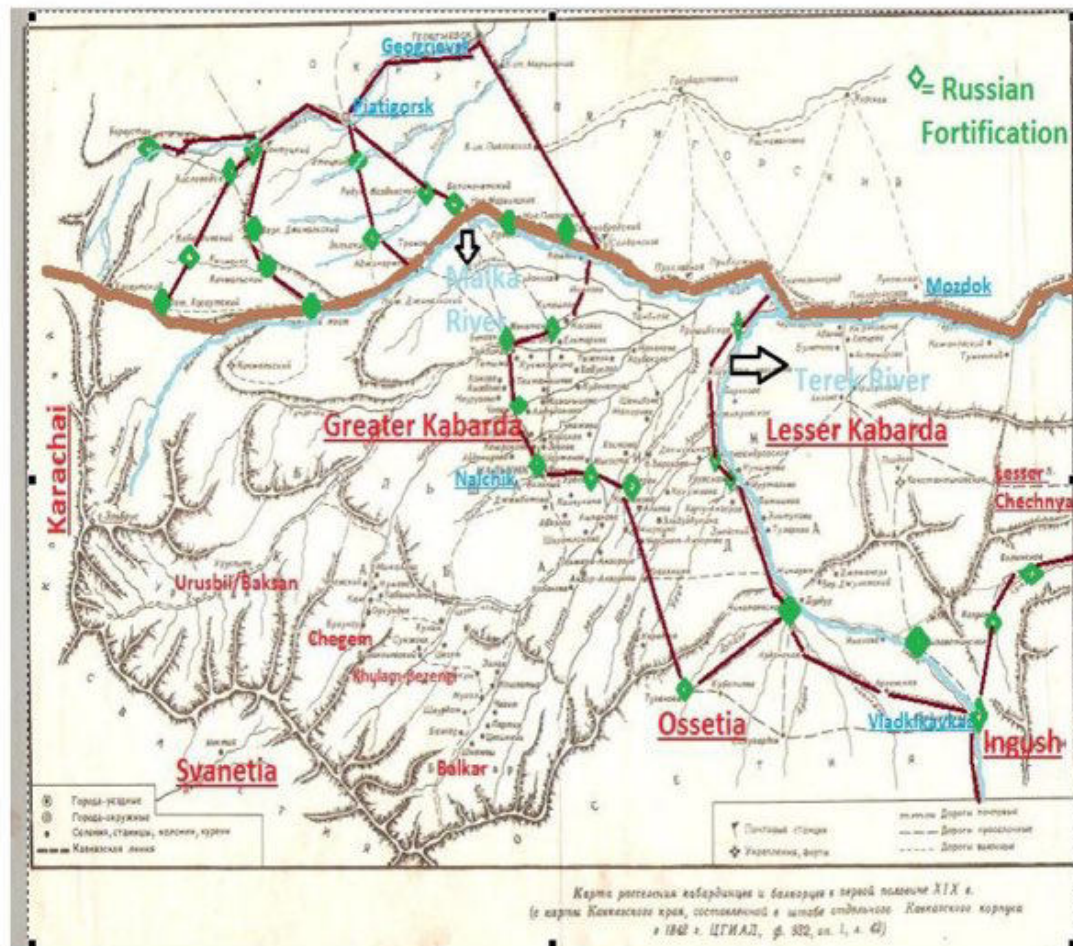


Figure 5: Kabarda and its neighbors circa 1842. Source: T.Kh. Kумыков et al., eds., *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR s drevneishikh vremen do Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi Revoliutsii, Tom I* (Moscow: Nauka, 1967).

The Anzorov Case: Colonization and the Disorder of Land Relations in Kabarda

The details of the story surrounding the Anzorov family and its lands reveal how Russian colonization and efforts at imperial integration affected intra-communal relations in the central Caucasus. They also bring into sharp relief the web of relations—connecting native elites, mountaineer peasants, Slavic settlers, colonial administrators in the Caucasus, and tsarist officials in St. Petersburg—around which the social world of the central Caucasus revolved in the period of administrative-legal uncertainty before the Great Reforms. Finally, the Anzorov case highlights some of the different roles that the tsarist state assumed in governing its empire: “bureaucrat-policeman,” “landscaper” and “referee”⁴¹

The colonial administration obtained most of the land for military settlements along the Georgian Military Highway from the Kabardian high-noble family, the Anzorovs,⁴² who then relocated their fiefdoms from the Terek plains to the foothills due south along the Terek tributaries Lesken and Uruk. ⁴³ Relocation was a relatively easy task given the straw construction of Kabardian dwellings and the traditional practice of periodic village resettlements in response to political and ecological factors (see chapter one).⁴⁴ However, the undefined and often anarchic nature of landownership in post-conquest Kabarda vastly complicated the process of the resettlement these feudal domains in the second third of the nineteenth century. The case of the Anzorovs and the

⁴¹ Breyfogle identifies these as characteristic traits of the imperial state in Eurasia. See Breyfogle, 61-76.

⁴² Small quantities of land were also taken from the Tausultanov lands of Lesser Kabarda. For the new *stantisy* in the Ossetian territory, the state took land from the Ossetian noble families the Kubatievs and the Tuganovs. See “1846 g. aprel’. Vedomost’ o zemliakh,” 118-20.

⁴³ Tiutiunina, 25-27.

⁴⁴ Kuz'minov, “Etnodemograficheskaia karta narodov Tereka,” 725.

land along the Georgian Military Highway in Kabarda would drag on into the 1860s, the era of the Peasant and Land Reforms in the North Caucasus.

To understand the dispute over the Anzorov lands transferred to the Cossack settlements of the Georgian Military Highway, we must go back to the early 1820s, a period of rupture when Kabarda's remaining elites were the final throws of their desperate resistance to Russian rule. During Ermolov's conquest of Kabarda, the still-powerful Anzorov high-noble (*tliakotlesh*) family, taking advantage of the dwindling strength, influence, and size of the distantly-related Kogolkin (*Kugualykua*) high-noble family, seized the latter's land along the Terek plains between the Uruk and Terek. In compensation, the Anzorovs gave the Kogolkins land of lesser size and quality, between the Uruk and Sheker branches of the Terek, just to the southwest of their old domains.⁴⁵ From their new lands, three of the Anzorov brothers known for their anti-Russian views, Amfoko, Inaluko, and Susruko, conducted raids on the Georgian Military Highway. Pursued by Ermolov's army, the Anzorov brothers joined numerous other Kabardian nobles in fleeing to their western Circassian brethren to live beyond the realm of Russian power. In fleeing across the Kuban, the Anzorov brothers risked losing their family domains to the Russian state because, in 1822, Ermolov decreed that, in fleeing Kabarda, rebellious nobles abjured all rights to their hereditary lands and property. To avoid land

⁴⁵ "1856 g. marta 12-go. – Kopia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu General'nogo shtaba ob otmezhevanii zemel' aulov Anzorovykh dlia poseleniia na Voenno-Gruzinskoi doroge stanits Vladikavkazskogo kazach'ego polka," in *Dokumenty po istorii adygov*, 125.

confiscations, the Anzorovs' children, coming of age around the time of Ermolov's conquest, assumed control of their hereditary lands.⁴⁶

This next generation of Anzorovs, at least initially, was more cooperative with the Russian authorities and more amenable to co-optation into Russian officialdom through military service. As was the case of many native nobles in Kabarda and elsewhere in Caucasia, the Anzorovs served as high-ranking officers in the Russian army, including the Caucasus-Mountaineer Squadron, the tsar's personal convoy in Saint Petersburg.⁴⁷ Indeed, Khatu Anzorov, highly decorated for his service in putting down the Polish Uprising of 1830, eventually rose to become the commander of the tsar's mountaineer convoy and the tsar's principal bodyguard, a position that enabled Khatu to ingratiate himself with Nicholas I.⁴⁸

In late 1837 and 1838 the tsarist administration approved plans for the construction of new *stanitsy* and military settlements to shore up the defenses of the Georgian Military Highway along the Terek River. Much of this new route for the Georgian Military Highway cut across Kabarda's Anzorov fiefdoms (Anzorei). Migration to Slavic settlements on Anzorov lands—the *stanitsa* Prishibskaia and Aleksandrovskoe military settlement—began in the spring of 1838 with the arrival of Cossacks from the

⁴⁶ "Report Polkovnika Petrusevicha vremennu komanduiushchemu voiskami na Kavkazskoi linii i v Chernomorii general-leitenantu kavleru Zavodovskomu o pereselenii Anzorovskikh aulov v drugie mesta," in *Territoria i rasselenie*, 58-59.

⁴⁷ For a list and biographical sketches of the Anzorovs in Russian military service see A.V. Kazakov, *Adygi (Cherkesy) na rossiiskoi voennoi sluzhbe. Voevody i ofitsery, seredina XVI – nachalo XX v.* (Nalchik: El'Fa, 2006), 34-46.

⁴⁸ R.U. Tuganov, "Komandir leib-gvardii Kavkazskogo gorskogo polueskadrona (general-maior Khatu Anzorov)," in *Stranitsy proshlogo – zemetki vnaeveda*, ed. R.U. Tuganov (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1989), 85-88.

Ukrainian Provinces of Chernigov and Poltava.⁴⁹ Farmland for these new settlements of Cossacks and retired soldiers would have to come from the surrounding Anzorov lands. The administration collected accounts from residents of Kabarda to determine the ownership of the land being seized by the state for the Cossack settlements.⁵⁰ Despite competing claims to these lands, most accounts agreed that, at the time, the Anzorovs controlled the lands under question.⁵¹ With the final survey of the Anzorov lands in 1839, the state expropriated more land from the Anzorovs to supply these *stanitsy*, and two more planned settlements, with sufficient land. Indeed, in late 1839 and early 1840, the administration established two additional settlements on Anzorov lands: the military settlement Kotliarevskoe, between the two existing settlements, and the *stanitsa* Urukhskaia, at the confluence of the Uruk and Terek.⁵² Finally, in 1840 the Caucasus military administration called upon Khatu, the highest-ranked Anzorov brother, to serve in the Vladikavkaz Cossack Regiment along the Georgian Military Highway as the head of the Zmeiskii blockpost, near his family's land.⁵³ It was around this time that Khatu moved his aul to Georgian Military Highway near the Zmeiskii post. Like the Cossacks along the highway's *stanitsy*, the tsarist administration entrusted Khatu and the residents of his aul with defending the Highway from attacks from "unpacified" mountaineers and *abreks* (brigands).⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *AKAK, Tom IX*, 281; Dzagov, 35.

⁵⁰ Tiutiunina, 25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 38; Tuganov, "Komandir leib-gvardii," 86.

⁵⁴ "1856 g. marta 12-go. – Kopia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu," 126.

Cossack settlement of the Georgian Military Highway led to tensions between the Caucasus administration and the Anzorovs. Kabardian peasants from the Anzorov lands entered into disputes with local authorities over payment for timber felling and hauling services rendered for the construction of the Cossack settlements.⁵⁵ More significantly, the establishment of these settlements meant a loss of farmland and pastures for the Anzorovs and their serfs, to which they did not immediately reconcile themselves. Land disputes frequently erupted between the Cossacks and the Anzorovs. Land relations were especially tense with Aleksandrovscoe because its farmlands cut into the best of the Anzorovs' land.⁵⁶ In 1842, the Anzorovs petitioned the Caucasus administration to decrease the size of Aleksandrovscoe's allotment: "with the transfer of our land to...[Aleksandrovscoe] we have been stripped of all means of farming, haymaking, and horse, sheep and cattle breeding...[W]e don't even have the means to support ourselves and our serfs."⁵⁷ At the time of the land transfers in 1839 and 1840, the state promised the Anzorovs monetary compensation or an equal amount of land elsewhere.⁵⁸ Given the unavailability of land of equal quantity and quality in Kabarda and the unwillingness of the Anzorov peasants to leave their native lands, neither of these options suited the Anzorovs. The petition continued: "Not having a sufficient amount of land, we are unable to request monetary compensation for the land. Rather, we humbly request that you limit the land transferred to the Aleksandrovscoe military settlement." The administration rejected this petition, arguing that because "the land for the military settlements was

⁵⁵ Tiutiunina, 33-35.

⁵⁶ N.A. Bal'zhatova, "O date osnovaniia s. Kaisyn-Anzorovo," *Arkhivy i obshchestvo* no. 19 (2012): 113-19.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Dzagov, 27.

⁵⁸ "1856 g. marta 12-go. – Kopiiia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu," 121.

surveyed in the presence of Khatu and Magomet-Murza Anzorov, and they received a receipt for this land, this land cannot be returned.”⁵⁹ Magomet-Murza Anzorov lost the most land to the new settlements. Two trips to the Commander of the Armies of the Caucasus in Tiflis yielded modest results (5,521 acres were returned to him from Urukhskaia) and he remained dissatisfied.⁶⁰

On the whole however, by at least the late 1830s, relations between Kabardians and Slavic settlers had stabilized around new economic symbiosis. To be sure, official reports from the Cossack administration frequently complained that “Kabardians, regarding the [Cossack] land as their own, interfere with the working of the land [by settlers].”⁶¹ But the Kabardians, decimated by plague and military conquest, could offer little by way of active resistance to Cossack colonization. Moreover, given Kabarda’s depopulation in the first decades of the nineteenth century, throughout the recent of the century, most Kabardian peasants did not experience land shortages as a result of Cossack and Russian military colonization. In these conditions of relative land abundance, an economic symbiosis based on trade developed between Kabardians and the mainly Cossack Slavic settlers. Cossacks supplied salt, fish, caviar, and received honey, wax, grain, millet, clothing, and horses from Kabardians.⁶² By mutual agreement, during times of drought, residents of the Russian villages and *stanitsy* could graze their

⁵⁹ Quoted in Dzagov, 27.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Quoted in Tkhamokova, *Russkoe i ukrainskoe naselenie Kabardino-Balkarii*, 30.

⁶² Dzagov, 101.

cattle on the right (Kabardian) bank of the River Malka, collect wild fruit, and chop timber and vice-versa for the Kabardian peasantry.⁶³

Problems arising from the administration's efforts to compensate the Anzorovs for the 37,233 acres land that the state took from them called the very nature of Kabardian land tenure into question—i.e. whether it was communal or private?—and led to conflict between the Anzorovs and the tsarist state. Forced to reconcile themselves to monetary compensation for this land, the Anzorovs agreed to take 18,510 rubles for their land in 1845.⁶⁴ However, confusion over landownership rights in Kabarda, led Viceroy of the Caucasus, Mikhail Vorontsov, to halt the dispensation of the compensatory funds. The main issue at stake was whether land in Kabarda was communal or private. If the state could prove that Kabardian customary land tenure was communal, it could avoid having to pay noble families like the Anzorovs for their land and, more generally, avoid the whole complex matter of determining land ownership for a society without written land titles. Most importantly, if, according to customary law, land in Kabarda was communally owned, the tsarist state could then resettle populations within that land at will, without violating property rights. On August 30, 1845, Viceroy Vorontsov's administration formed a commission to investigate whether the nobles—the Anzorovs and several other families—who were being compensated for lands transferred to Georgian Military Highway settlements actually owned this land according to Kabardian

⁶³ Ibid., 33; Tkhamokova, *Russkoe i ukrainskoe naselenie Kabardino-Balkarii*, 26.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 28.

customary law, or if the land “belong[ed] to the people or individual societies whom they controlled and lived among.”⁶⁵

Tsarist conquest had thoroughly disrupted traditional land use and ownership patterns in Kabarda and subverted traditional feudal hierarchies within the Kabardian village. Indeed, much of the administration’s confusion over landownership in Kabarda was due to the relatively recent upheavals of warfare and plague. Many Kabardian noblemen who came out of the first quarter of the nineteenth century in good standing seized land from those families who were weakened, had died off, or had fled the region.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, Kabardian peasants, taking advantage of the weakened power of the Kabardian nobility after the tsarist conquest, expanded the size of their communal holding at the expense of former noble and princely lands and rejected attempts of feudal lords to dispense with these lands.⁶⁷ The Russian state, on the other hand, only recognized ownership rights of those who had official documents—from the tsarist administration or from their own native institutions—proving their rights. Since Kabarda was not a literate society, and the tsarist state had not conducted an official cadastral survey of Kabarda’s lands, most Kabardian nobles and princes did not possess any documentation affirming their status as landowners. Lists of landowners in Russian and Arabic existed from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Chichagov’s maps of 1744 and accompanying materials, for example). But these lists often contradicted each other and were poor reflections of the reality on the ground after Russian conquest. Much

⁶⁵ “1856 g. marta 12-go. – Kopia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu,” 122.

⁶⁶ Kумыков, *Ekonomicheskoe i kul’turnoe razvitiie*, 131.

⁶⁷ V. Kazharov, “K voprosu o dualizme,” 32-33.

of the administrative chaos surrounding the land question in the 1830s-1850s was due to Kabardians, with competing land claims, appealing to the tsarist administration for the issuance of land titles. In other cases, the administration gifted lands to loyal Kabardians without much concern for determining which family legally owned the land according to Kabardian custom (*khabze*).⁶⁸

The reexamination of the ownership of lands transferred to Cossack settlements can be read in two ways. It can be read as an attempt by the Caucasus administration and, in particular, the Center of the Caucasus Line, to gain a better understanding of customary law or *adat* and the complexities of landownership and land-use in Kabarda in order to better administer the region and adjudicate disputes. In describing Russia's attempts to effectively conduct agrarian and land policies in its recently annexed Muslim provinces of Transcaucasia, Ekaterina Pravilova concludes that, "in the 1820s-40s the government blindly cast about for a suitable policy."⁶⁹ This assessment applies equally well to Kabarda in the central Caucasus after its annexation by Russia during a roughly contemporaneous period. Though in the central Caucasus, where Islamic legal norms were relatively weak compared with Transcaucasia, it was more tsarist administrators' ignorance of *adat* (*khabza* in the Kabardian case) than their "extremely limited knowledge of...Islamic legal doctrine and practices" that impeded their ability to administer the region effectively. Based on the tsarist administration's communalization

⁶⁸ T.A. Kagiieva, "Zemel'naia politika tsarskogo pravitel'stva v Kabarde vo vtoroi polovine XVIII – nachale XX v," *Arkhiv i obshchestvo* no. 4 (2008): 125-32.

⁶⁹ Pravilova, 361.

of land two decades later during the land reforms, another interpretation of the administration's reexamination of landownership claims is also plausible.

By suggesting that communal landownership was the dominant form of land tenure in Kabarda—a possibility largely precluded by the type of feudalism that existed in Kabarda for several centuries—the colonial administration first indicated its desire to use legal pluralism (the co-existence of customary law and empire-wide laws) in order to simplify the land question in Kabarda to suit its aims for the region. First, if tsarist administrators could interpret Kabardian customary law to include communal landownership, they would not have to deal with the resolution of numerous land disputes between competing noble families, saving the administration great expenses of time and money. Second, if, since at least the time of Ermolov, the military administration in the Caucasus dispensed with Kabardian land at its discretion, as “state patrimony”,⁷⁰ the administrative transformation of Kabarda's territory into communal property would provide the tsarist state with legal justification to this continue this practice in a period when security concerns alone could no longer prove a sufficient justification.

In other words, under a communal land system in which land was the collective property of the Kabardian people, the state could legally resettle Kabardian auls at will without violating ownership rights. Dispossessing the Kabardian nobility of their land in this way would greatly facilitate future land reforms in the central Caucasus. Whatever the reason for raising the question of communal land in Kabarda, if communalization was the goal of at least some within the Caucasus administration, they did not succeed at this

⁷⁰ I borrow this phrase from Pravilova. See *ibid.*, 373.

juncture because, under wartime conditions elsewhere in the region, tsarist administrators did not want to pursue policies that risked upsetting the social order in Kabarda.⁷¹

In the meantime, events in April 1846 dramatically altered the position of the Anzorovs in the eyes of the Caucasus administration and provided the opportunity to expropriate more land without having to provide compensation. In April 1846, Imam Shamil and between ten-and twenty thousand of his fighters invaded Kabarda, hoping to link up with the anti-Russian forces of the northwest Caucasus under the leadership of Shamil's commander (*naib*) Suleiman Efendi. This mission was of crucial importance for Shamil and his imamate; if the invasion of Kabarda met with success, he would be able, for the first time, to unite all resistance forces against Russia's armies. While many in Kabarda sympathized with the aims of Shamil's movement and had only antipathy for Russian rule, most Kabardians, having paid dearly for resistance two decades earlier, were reluctant to offer Shamil's forces active military support in Kabarda. This lack of active support among the Kabardian masses enabled Russia's armies to drive Shamil from Kabarda after less than two weeks.⁷²

Among the dozen-or-so Kabardian elites who welcomed Shamil into Kabarda and provided him with active assistance were several Anzorov elders.⁷³ Magomet-Murza

⁷¹ However, as we will see in chapter three, the administration did not drop these efforts at turning much of Kabarda's land into communal property; eighteen years later, the Commission tasked with implementing the land reforms in Kabarda met with greater success.

⁷² On Shamil's 1846 incursion into Kabarda and its larger significance see A.D. Panesh, "Pokhod Shamilia v Kabardu v 1846 g. i geopolitichskaia situatsiia na Tsentral'nom Kavkaze," *Arkhivy i obshchestvo* no. 14 (2010): 128-33.

⁷³ For a list of Kabardian lords who joined Shamil in 1846 see "Svedeniia o zemliakh Bol'shoi Kabardy, sobrannye po narodnym pokazaniiam polkolnikom Petrusevichem v 1846 godu," in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 66-82. On the behavior of the Anzorovs during Shamil's invasion, see "Otnoshenie gen-adiut Adlerberga k kn Vorontsovu, ot 15-go maia 1846 goda, no. 352," in *AKAK*, *Tom X*, 586.

Anzorov was the most active of Shamil's Kabardian volunteers.⁷⁴ His case resembles that of other prominent native elites on both sides of the battle lines in the North Caucasus who "switched sides."⁷⁵ Angry with the tsarist administration for what he deemed as unfair compensation for his portion of the Anzorov family land,⁷⁶ Magomet-Murza, like others before and after him, defected to Shamil more out of personal grievances and a desire for vengeance than for ideological reasons. According to one report, Magomet-Murza had pledged his support to Shamil in a letter three years earlier. In the years before Shamil's 1846 incursion into Kabarda, Magomet-Murza, an officer in the Russian Army and a respected member of the Kabardian upper nobility, continued to earn the trust of the Russian administration. In particular, Magomet-Murza ingratiated himself with the head of the Center of the Caucasus Line, Prince Vladimir Golytsin, and his family, and represented Kabarda in a deputation to Tsar Nicholas I in 1844. On April 18, when Shamil's forces began their approach to Kabarda, Magomet-Murza was calmly playing cards with prince Golitsyn. One of Magomet-Murza's retainers interrupted the game to secretly inform him of Shamil's approach. Magomet-Murza left the game, mounted his horse, and rode off to join the rebel Imam. Shamil used Magomet-Murza's auls as his base of operations during his assault on Kabarda. Shamil's armies burned down the auls of Khatu Anzorov, Magomet-Murza's estranged brother and the tsar's loyal servant in St. Petersburg.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ His name is sometimes rendered as Magomet-Mirza.

⁷⁵ The most notorious of these defectors were Hadji Murad (made famous by Leo Tolstoy in his short story titled with the same name), Musa Kundukhov, and Semen Atarshchikov. Michael Khodarkovsky deals with the latter two figures in *Bitter Choices*.

⁷⁶ Tiutiunina, 27.

⁷⁷ Beituganov, *Istoriia i familii*, 106-13.

The assistance accorded to Shamil by the Anzorovs facilitated Shamil's efforts in breaking through the Georgian Military Highway. This allowed Shamil's forces to temporarily occupy Greater Kabarda. Magomet-Murza was among the several hundred Kabardians who followed Shamil back to Chechnya after Russian troops routed him several weeks later. Shamil promoted Magomet-Murza Anzorov to a military governor (*naib*) in his Imamate.⁷⁸ Two other Anzorov brothers, guilty of lesser acts of treason in the eyes of the Russian administration, gave themselves up to the authorities to face punishment after hiding out in the forests of Kabarda for several weeks.⁷⁹

The Anzorovs' "betrayal" transformed the colonial administration's approach to land relations and population politics along the Georgian Military Highway. If the presence of the high-ranking native nobles constrained the administration's efforts at settling the Georgian Military Highway exclusively with loyal Cossack and Slavic populations, the Anzorovs' actions during Shamil's invasion of Kabarda provided the Caucasus administration with a convenient pretext for removing the Kabardian (Anzorov) population from the Georgian Military Highway. Indeed, Russian military officials lamented their inability to uncover the anti-Russian sympathies of other prominent Kabardian nobles because further revelations of treason would have facilitated land reform throughout Kabarda by giving the administration a pretext to expropriate noble land. In his report on Shamil's invasion of Kabarda, General Aleksandr Adlerberg, one of the commanders of the counteroffensive against Shamil, regretted that the Imam had not

⁷⁸ Arapov et al. 126.

⁷⁹ Accounts indicate that Anzor Anzorov and Kuchuk Anzorov were forced to serve Shamil when the latter occupied their auls. See "1856 g. marta 12-go. — Kopia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu," 123.

spent longer in other parts Kabarda. In addition to providing Russian forces with the opportunity of capturing the elusive rebel leader, a longer stay by Shamil would have provided an opportunity for more disloyal Kabardian elites to show their true sympathies. According to Adlerberg, "If we were able to find out which Kabardians were loyal and which ones were on the side of Shamil, it would open up for us the possibility of using confiscations of estates of traitors to freely obtain land, the purchase of which demands great costs, for planned resettlements in Kabarda."⁸⁰

In the wake of Shamil's invasion, the Viceroy of the Caucasus, Mikhail Vorontsov, ordered the resettlement of the auls belonging to Selim, Magomet-Murza, and Khatu Anzorov away from the Georgian Military Highway "to places where the administration can keep better watch over them." Vorontsov punished Anzor and Kuchuk Anzorov, guilty more of "cowardice and indecisiveness" (*malodushie i nereshitel'nost'*) during Shamil's invasion than active treason, by temporarily withholding their salaries, demoting them, and sending them to perform their military service in other parts of the empire. While Vorontsov promised Khatu and Selim Anzorov compensation for the land, the Caucasus administration seized all of the moveable and immovable property of the fugitive brigand (*abrek*), Magomet-Murza Anzorov, without compensation. However, from the earliest discussions on how to deal with the Anzorovs after Shamil's invasion, the state made an exception for Khatu Anzorov, since he was "noted for his loyal service and was not involved in the events of 1846, but was rather in Saint Petersburg serving as the tsar's personal guard." Vorontsov ordered that Khatu Anzorov, whom he viewed as

⁸⁰ "Otnoshenie gen-adiut Adlerberga k kn Vorontsovu," 586.

an exemplary native elite, be given “special attention in the resettlement of the Anzorov auls and that he be given the best lands so that, through resettlement, he does endure any losses but rather that, if possible, his economic position be strengthened.” Vorontsov ordered the transfer to Khatu Anzorov of all of Magomet-Murza’s movable property and any land that may be left over after the full satisfaction of the land needs of the Vladikavkaz Cossack Regiment.⁸¹

In August 1846, Vorontsov established a new commission to replace the one formed August 1845 for the reexamination of compensation for the lands expropriated by the state along the Georgian Military Highway. Vorontsov tasked this commission with the job of determining which of the lands formerly belonging to Magomet-Murza should be transferred to the state, which (if any) Kabardian lords deserve monetary compensation for land transferred to the Vladikavkaz Cossack Regiment (from 1839 on), and a desirable place for the resettlement of the Anzorov auls. Vorontsov excluded “traitors” from list of those who could potentially receive compensation.⁸²

The commission’s thorough questioning of Kabarda’s elders determined that much of the land claimed by the Anzorovs in fact belonged to another noble family, the Kogolkins. Based on the testimony of these elders, the Kabardian deputies to the commission indicated that all of the land north of the Digora frontier between the Uruk and Terek rivers—lands of occupied by the auls of Khatu Anzorov and Magomet Murza Anzorov—historically belonged to the Kogolkin high-noble family by right of inheritance and that the Anzorovs only settled on this land 25 years prior to 1846. When

⁸¹ “1856 g. marta 12-go. – Kopia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu,” 123-24.

⁸² Ibid, 124.

the Anzorovs took over the Kogolkin lands, they resettled the Kogolkins to a smaller territory on the Anzorovs' historic family lands, just west of the Kogolkin lands between the Uruk and Lesken rivers.⁸³ In February 1847, the commission informed the Anzorovs of their places of resettlement.⁸⁴ However, in a testament to the administration's lack of knowledge of landownership in Kabarda, these locations turned out to be owned by other families. Free or, more accurately, unclaimed land in Kabarda, with which to compensate the Anzorovs, was unavailable.⁸⁵ The Anzorovs were forced to resettle to their remaining family lands, where they suffered from insufficient land resources. The commission also officially transferred the lands previously occupied by the auls of Magomet-Murza and Khatu Anzorov, on the historic Kogolkin lands between the Uruk and Terek, to the Vladikavkaz Cossack Regiment. Part of this land went to the existing *stanitsa* Urukhskaia and the administration set most of it aside for a new *stanitsa*, Zmeiskaia, established in 1849.⁸⁶

With his lands confiscated, compensation being withheld, and what he believed was unfair punishment meted out to his brothers, Khatu Anzorov, now serving as a Commander of the tsar's mountaineer guards in St. Petersburg, embarked on a mission to obtain justice for himself and, if possible, his family. Clashing with the unwieldy bureaucratic machinery of the tsarist state, Khatu, would spend the better part of a decade on his campaign, losing his health and money in the process. In 1856, Khatu died

⁸³ "Report Polkovnika Petrusevicha vremenno komanduiushchemu voiskami na Kavkazskoi linii," 58-59.

⁸⁴ "1856 g. marta 12-go. – Kopia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu," 126.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 129; For new location of the Anzorov auls by the end of 1847 see Bal'zhatova, 116.

⁸⁶ "Otnoshenie kn Vorontsova k kn Chernyshevu, ot 1-go noiabria 1849 goda . No. 41," in *AKAK, Tom X*, 326.

destitute in St. Petersburg, his appeals for compensation still unresolved, and his debts passed on to his widow and children.

In 1849, Khatu took leave of his military duties in St. Petersburg to set his family's affairs in order in the Caucasus. Khatu's principal aim was to convince Viceroy Vorontsov to allow the Anzorovs to move their auls back to their former territories near the Georgian Military Highway between the Uruk and the left-bank of the Terek on the river Zmeika. Weighing in on Khatu's request, the head of the Vladikavkaz Military District, Major General Il'inskii argued to the Chief of Staff of the Caucasus armies, General Kotzebue, that "the resettlement of the Anzorov auls back to the Zmeika would cause great harm to both the Vladikavkaz Cossack Regiment and to the general security of the Georgian Military Highway. It would allow secret collusion between Kabardians and Chechens." To bolster his case, Khatu cited numerous reasons why he believed that his land had been unfairly expropriated from him: frequent resettlement had been forced upon him and his family by the administration; his family only moved to the Georgian Military Highway to provide security; these frequent resettlements had been disastrous to the Anzorovs' economic wellbeing; this latest resettlement is forcing the Anzorovs off lands where their ancestors are buried; and they had not received due compensation for previous land transfers. In a separate memorandum, Kotzebue attacked Khatu's argument point by point by retorting that the Anzorovs, like many Kabardian clans, were accustomed to resettling their auls from place to place and had done so on their own accord several times in the first half of the nineteenth century; that these resettlements were not economically onerous because their homes were built from straw; that the

Anzorovs should not be allowed to return to their previous areas of settlement and should not be given monetary compensation because this land, claimed by Khatu as his ancestral land, legally belonged to the Kogolkins' and the Anzorovs settled it relatively recently; finally, Kotzebue pointed out that if the Caucasus administration originally gave the Anzorovs security duties along the Georgian Military Highway, they did not perform these duties well. Therefore, at their meeting in Tiflis in 1849, Viceroy Vorontsov rejected Khatu's request to be allowed to return his aul to his former lands.⁸⁷

Adding further frustration to the Anzorovs' plight, in 1849 the Commission finally released the funds for the compensation of Kabardian landowners whose lost land went to Cossack settlement in 1839-40. However, the Anzorovs' share of this compensation was adjusted down from 18,510 to 11,521 rubles. The difference went to the Kogolkins.⁸⁸

In a bid to satisfy Khatu, a high-ranking officer with great clout, Vorontsov allowed Khatu to work with the administration of the Center of the Caucasus Line to find free land in Greater Kabarda that would be even better than his former land. However, at this point, Khatu would agree to nothing less than the return of his family land. Members of the Caucasus administration began to show frustration with Khatu's case. In a statement reflecting his orientalist and generally unsympathetic views of Kabardians, General Zavadovskii, Chief of the Armies of the Caucasus Line, wrote to Vorontsov

⁸⁷ "1856 g. marta 12-go. – Kopia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu," 127-29.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 130.

regarding Khatu's repeated requests: "How difficult it is to force an Asiatic to be satisfied with the resolution of a case, even when this resolution has been made in his favor."⁸⁹

November 1849, Chief of the Center of the Caucasus Line, the Georgian prince Georgii Eristov, came up with a resolution that would at least partially satisfy Khatu. Eristov permitted Khatu to settle an allotment of land between the Sheker and Uruk rivers. This allotment was much smaller than the one previously controlled by Khatu and Magomet-Murza that he had hoped to return his auls to. This land had belonged to Selim-Gerei Anzorov before the 1846 requisitions; therefore, it would satisfy Khatu's aim of preserving the Anzorov lands. Unlike Khatu's former land between the Terek and Uruk, which had been transferred to the stanitsy Urukhskaia and Zmeiskaia, this land still lay vacant. Finally, this allotment was also far enough away from the Georgian Military Highway to satisfy the 1846 decree banning Anzorov settlement along the Highway. In early 1850, Khatu resettled his aul to this land with the condition the he be given additional land elsewhere in Greater Kabarda to compensate for difference in size between his and his brother's allotment and this new one.⁹⁰

Still dissatisfied with his family's lack of land, Khatu petitioned Vorontsov again in April 1850. Representing the interests of his family, Khatu requested the following: 1) a survey of the remaining land to which the Anzorovs had ownership rights and a clarification of their borders with the neighboring Cossack settlements; 2) full compensation for the lands that the Caucasus administration expropriated from them after 1846; 3) an official document affirming that the land they then occupied was in their

⁸⁹ Ibid., 128.

⁹⁰ Beituganov, *Istoriia i familii*, 57.

permanent control, so that their land would not be subject to any further disputes or expropriations; and 4) compensation for the timber that had been cut down for the construction of homes in the Cossack *stanitsy*. Khatu received a negative answer to each of these requests. Vorontsov recognized the idea of surveying the Anzorov lands and issuing titles of ownership to these lands as “a just and useful measure that would make residents more loyal to the government.” However, Vorontsov claimed that the administration would have to “carefully examine the many complex questions of landownership in Kabarda” before it could issue land titles to the Anzorovs and other landowners. Here Vorontsov skirted around the on-going debate within the Caucasus administration of whether Kabarda’s land would be deemed communal or private. By delaying the issuance of titles, the Caucasus administration kept its options open for future land reforms in Kabarda. Concerning the question of compensation for the land taken after 1846, Vorontsov informed Khatu that a government commission had already determined that this land belonged to the Kogolkins and that 7,000 rubles compensation had been allotted for it. However, since Khatu did not have a representative in the commission, he was allowed to appeal to the Kabardian Temporary Court for a ruling on this land according to customary law. Finally, citing the fact that the forests of Kabarda had historically been communal, Vorontsov argued that the Anzorovs could not claim compensation for timber used for the construction of the Cossack *stanitsy*.⁹¹

In August and September 1851 events forced Khatu to return to the Caucasus once more. First, in August, the Kabardian Temporary Court attempted to litigate the

⁹¹ “1856 g. marta 12-go. – Kopia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu,” 129-30.

Anzorovs' appeal of the decision to recognize the Kogolkins and the true owners of the land between the Uruk and Terek expropriated by the state after 1846. This attempt at resolving the dispute failed because the witnesses called to give testimony from each side—Khatu's son Ismail Anzorov and his dependent nobles Shokar Togov and Iskhak Kupseshev, and Pshemakho and Khadzhi Kogolkin—could not provide enough information. With Khatu Anzorov back in St. Petersburg and unavailable to testify, Prince Eristov had to dismiss the case. Shortly thereafter, Khatu received word that his son, Ismail, a cornet in the Caucasus cadet corps, had fled to the mountains (i.e. joined the anti-Russian resistance).⁹² Confined to his father's small allotment between the Sheker and Uruk rivers, Ismail's flight, Khatu speculated, was due to his economic destitution resulting from insufficient farmland and pasturage.⁹³ Intervening on Khatu's behalf, on a report outlining Khatu's request for leave to the Caucasus to seek out his son and put his estate's affairs in order, Tsar Nicholas wrote, "I agree. I am sorry for the old man. It is necessary to write to Vorontsov, that I favorably request him to sort out my faithful servant."⁹⁴

After returning his son to his military duties in late 1851, Khatu petitioned Vorontsov for land equal to the amount taken from him and his brother, Magomet-Murza.

⁹² Tuganov, "Komandir leib-gvardii," 87.

⁹³ "1856 g. marta 12-go. – Kopia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu," 131.

⁹⁴ Tuganov, "Komandir leib-gvardii," 87.

Khatu requested two smaller plots of land located at different parts of Kabarda that, in total, would equal to the 32,400 acres (12,000 desiatins) taken in 1846.⁹⁵

In determining the possibility of granting Khatu's request, Vorontsov deferred to the Chief of the Armies of the Caucasus Line, General Zavadovskii, noted for his hostility toward Khatu and to the peoples of the Caucasus in general. In September 1852, Zavadovskii reported to Vorontsov that these lands could not be given to Khatu because other Kabardian lords controlled them and, if these land were given to Khatu, "instead of ending the plight of one person, new problems will be created for many people, the satisfaction of which will be much more difficult than the satisfaction of one Khatu Anzorov."⁹⁶ Zavadovskii suggested communal landownership as an expedient means to end disputes over private landownership and avoid the disputes that would likely arise during a future survey and delimitation of Kabarda's land. Zavadovskii envisaged a resolution whereby all the Anzorovs, including Khatu, would share their land communally among themselves and their dependents, but not have any ownership rights to this land. In this case, the administration would merely allow Khatu's family and his serfs to use land around the place of his settlement according to actual need based on communal rights. Zavadovskii justified this move by arguing that "while the Anzorovs were at one time the actual owners of their land, after their treason and flight to the mountains [in 1822], they lost all ownership rights in accordance with General Ermolov's proclamation [on the transfer to the state of lands of fugitives]." Thus, according to

⁹⁵ Some of this land was historic Anzorov land, the rest was mountainous land between the Malka and Baksan rivers. "1856 g. marta 12-go. – Kopia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu," 132.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 131.

Zavadovskii's reasoning, the administration would have been justified in dispensing with the Anzorov lands at its own discretion all along. However, Zavadovskii reluctantly acknowledged that, given the tsar's orders that Khatu be rewarded for his service, Khatu should be given an additional 1,500 desiatins (4,050 acres) of private land wherever the government deems it expedient or, if Khatu does not find this land suitable, then the government should offer him, 5,000 rubles. Vorontsov agreed with Zavadovskii's ideas. Vorontsov further noted that Khatu could not be given any lands until the administration surveyed Kabarda's land because it was unclear what, if any, land was available in Kabarda. Vorontsov informed Khatu that the Caucasus administration could only provide him with a monetary award for his service of 5,000 rubles.⁹⁷

Unwilling to accept a monetary reward, Khatu appealed to the Tsar for help in obtaining sufficient land for his estate in Kabarda. An example of the very personal nature of tsarist rule, the Commander of the Emperor's main residence passed a note to Nicholas I, explaining that "Khatu's land in the Caucasus is his main source of income. It provides for the existence of his dependents, cattle and horses and could not be exchanged for anything, even if the Sovereign Emperor ordered payment for all the land taken from him, Khatu's livelihood would still be ruined; in losing his dependents, cattle, and horses, he would lose everything." Nicholas interceded on Khatu's behalf again and requested that Viceroy Vorontsov determine the possibility of allowing Khatu to choose a plot of land in Greater Kabarda equal to his former lands or returning to Khatu the land

⁹⁷ Ibid., 133.

that his aul occupied before its deportation from the Georgian Military Highway.⁹⁸ In 1853, in order to fulfill the Emperor's request to provide of Khatu Anzorov with land in Kabarda in the same amount that he and his brother controlled on the Georgian Military Highway, Vorontsov ordered the formation of a commission to examine land rights in Kabarda.⁹⁹ This would be the first of many commissions charged with the daunting task of establishing land rights throughout Kabarda.

The Commission's findings demonstrate the tsarist administration's security dilemma in the North Caucasus: policies aimed at securing the empire often subverted the goal of effective imperial administration and imperial integration. The Commission's findings also demonstrate the ways in which imperial conquest had transformed traditional Kabardian social and legal structures.

The Commission's findings established what the administration already suspected: tsarist conquest and colonization had undermined historic land relations in Kabarda to such an extent that any attempt to litigate land disputes or establish definitive landownership rights would open a Pandora's Box of new disputes. Ultimately, under the current hybrid system of land tenure, the tsarist administration was unable to effectively perform administrative functions associated with questions of land tenure and ownership. The administration discovered that Kabarda's land historically belonged to about a dozen princely and high-noble families (the latter included the Anzorovs). Their land rights resembled the *votchina* system of ancient Rus'; estates were inherited patrilineally and

⁹⁸ Ibid., 134.

⁹⁹ Kumykov, *Ekonomichskoe i kul'turnoe razvitie*, 202.

the lord had complete control over the land and his vassals who resided on it. These princes and high-nobles distributed allotments within these fiefdoms to their vassals. Situated lower on Kabarda's feudal hierarchy, these nobles (*uorks*) enjoyed rights to land and the serfs who worked it in exchange for military service to the lord. The fiefdoms of the lower nobility were similar to the Russian *pomest'e*. Using the military service of their vassal nobles, the princes and high-nobles often entered into conflict with each other to expand the size of their *votchiny*. Finally, there were small quantities of communal lands that the Kabardian peasantry used collectively.¹⁰⁰ These findings accurately reflected the pre-colonial system of land relations in Kabarda.

By eroding the power of Kabarda's leading princes and nobles and redistributing land, the introduction of Russian rule transformed this system of land relations so that, by the 1830s, it had become increasingly difficult to determine true ownership of land in Kabarda. Russian rule first brought an end to most of the control that Kabarda's elite enjoyed over neighboring communities. Next, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Kabarda's internal order collapsed. The power of the princes and upper nobility eroded as the tsarist administration replaced their historic role as benefactor.¹⁰¹ As a result, a new type of landownership became more common: individual ownership (i.e. land owned by one person and his direct descendants). In general, individual landownership came to coexist with family fiefdoms for two reasons, both of which were largely the result of Russian conquest. Free Kabardians with the strength to do so in the

¹⁰⁰ "1856 g. marta 12-go. – Kopia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu," 134-135.

¹⁰¹ In his 1829 report to Viceroy Paskevich, General-Adjutant Ivan Dibich described the weakened state of the Kabardian nobility since Ermolov's conquest. See, "Otnoshenie gr. Dibicha k gen. Paskevichu, ot 4-go fevralia 1829 goda, No. 425," in *AKAK, Tom VII*, 867.

wake of plague and conquest, settled on lands to which they had no historic familial claim.¹⁰² Second, during the chaos of conquest, especially in the early 1820s, the military administration resettled auls at will and gifted land to loyal elites. Finally, the state claimed the rights to lands of Kabardian princes and nobles who had fled Kabarda; however, in many cases (including that of the Anzorovs) descendants of these Kabardian fugitives continued to control this land.¹⁰³ Thus, in the mid-nineteenth century, the existence of these two types of land ownership—family fiefdoms and individually-owned estates—convinced the administration of the need to simplify the question of landownership in Kabarda by conducting a thoroughgoing land reform.¹⁰⁴

Regarding the possibility of allotting Khatu Anzorov with lands in Kabarda, the commission argued that there was no free land available in Kabarda and that, according to customary law, lords could not sell their land (although, clearly, the administration made an exception for Kabardian land that the state needed for strategic purposes, such as that lying along the Georgian Military Highway).¹⁰⁵ Moreover, Vorontsov understood that additional land redistributions would exacerbate intra-communal conflict in Kabarda. Vorontsov concluded:

[U]nder these conditions of landownership in Greater Kabarda, it is apparent that the formal recognition of land as private and inheritable property by the government, even if in the case of lands that clearly belong to their owners, will be accompanied by significant complications; therefore, it has hitherto been

¹⁰² “Svedeniia o zemliakh Bol’shoi Kabardy,” 70.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 66-82.

¹⁰⁴ For a summary of land relations in Kabarda in the mid nineteenth century, see Kумыков, *Ekonomichkoe i kul’turnoe razvitiie*, 131-38.

¹⁰⁵ In reality, a noble could sell land in feudal Kabarda, but such land sales were rare because all of the extended family members of a given fiefdom and the prince or high-noble upon whom the lesser nobles depended had to give their consent. See *ibid.*, 136.

impossible to set about the delimitation of land here. It is all-the-more impossible, therefore, to allot land to Kabardians to whom the land does not belong, as is being suggested in the case of Colonel Khatu Anzorov, because it would immediately cause a large grumblings and displeasure among all classes in Kabarda.¹⁰⁶

On March 14, 1853, Vorontsov informed the Tsar of the impossibility of allotting land in Kabarda to Khatu, and suggested that the administration could give Khatu a large quantity of land outside of Kabarda. Specifically, Vorontsov mentioned the possibility of allotting 32,400 acres (12,000 desiatins) from the vast steppes of Stavropol' *Guberniia*, 60 miles north of Kabarda. Nicholas I approved Vorontsov's suggestion.¹⁰⁷ However, in February 1855, having accumulated heavy debts through the loss of much of his estate income and expenditure on frequent travel between the Caucasus and St. Petersburg, Khatu declined Vorontsov's offer of land in favor of the 5,000 rubles offered to him three years earlier.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately for Khatu, Vorontsov's latest offer did not include a monetary option, so Khatu had to re-petition for the 5,000 rubles. As the tsarist bureaucracy examined Khatu's latest request, Khatu earned the rank of Major General and returned to his native land to serve what would be the last year of his life in the Caucasus Corps.¹⁰⁹ Khatu Anzorov passed away on April 29, 1856, leaving a debt of 5,438 rubles to his widow and children.¹¹⁰ Khatu never received his long-sought-after compensation.

¹⁰⁶ "1856 g. marta 12-go. – Kopia s doklada po 3-mu otdeleniiu," 135.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 136.

¹⁰⁹ Tuganov, "Komandir leib-gvardii," 88.

¹¹⁰ "1856 g. iiunia 26-go. – Kopia s raporta nachal'nika shtaba otdel'nogo Kavkazskogo korpusa vremenno komanduiushchemu voiskami na Kavkazskoi linii o vzyskanii s naslednikov Khatu Anzorova dolga 3438 r. 48 k. srebrom," in *Dokumenty po istorii adygov*, 137-38.

Khatu's widow, Ferdous, and son, Ismail, continued his quest for compensation. In February 1857, Ferdous requested the land owed to her late-husband for her children and, for herself, a pension so that she could pay off her husband's debts. At this point, she would "accept with thankfulness any allotment of land anywhere, so long as it was good land conducive to agriculture."¹¹¹ Khatu's son, Ismail, echoed his mother's request for land. Ismail hoped for land in Greater Kabarda between the Kichmalka and Iutsa rivers, but would settle for the 32,400 acres in Stavropol' Guberniia promised to his late father. In June 1857, Minister of War Miliutin satisfied the requests of Ferdous and Ismail. The state granted the descendants of Khatu about 24,400 of the promised 32,400 acres in the Gor'ko-Balk steppes of Stavropol Guberniia. In compensation for the remaining 8,000 acres, the government would write off Khatu's debts. Miliutin stipulated, however, that acceptance of this land would disqualify Khatu's descendants from receiving any private land in Kabarda in the event of future land reforms. Moreover, the state according Khatu's widow a pension.¹¹² Khatu's family accepted this offer, finally putting an end to a bitter seventeen-year quest for economic justice from the colonial regime.¹¹³

The story of the tsarist state's expropriation of Anzorov lands for Cossack settlement, and that of the personal quest of Khatu Anzorov to obtain fair compensation for this land, is a vital part of the larger story of how Russian rule transformed the

¹¹¹ "1857 g. fevralia 1-go. – Kopia s dokladnoi zapiski vdovy general-maiora Khatu Anzorova general-maioru Gramotinu o bedstvennom polozhenii sem'i," in *Dokumenty po istorii adygov*, 138-39.

¹¹² "1857 g. iunია 13-go. – Kopia s otzyva ispravliaiushchego dolzhnost' nachal'nika glavnogo shtaba voisk na Kavkaze nakhodiashchikhsia, komanduiushchemu levogo kryla Kavkazskoi linii ob otvode zemel' sem'e pokoinogo general-maiora Khatu Anzorova v Gor'kobalkovskoi stepi," in *Dokumenty po istorii adygov*, 139-42.

¹¹³ "1857 g. – Raport komanduiushchego voiskami Levogo kryla Kavkazskoi linii general-leitenanta Evodokimova nachal'niku tsentra Kavkazskoi linii general-maioru Gramotinu o nadelanii zemlei naslednikov familiii Anzorovykh," in *Dokumenty po istorii adygov*, 143.

relationship of the societies of the central Caucasus, and Kabarda in particular, with their land and with each other.

Given the unsettled nature of land rights and borders in Kabarda, which the Anzorov case highlights, the Caucasus administration was unable to establish any new Slavic settlements (Cossack or otherwise) on Kabardian lands after the formation of Zmeiskaia in 1849. Meanwhile, the existing Cossack *stanitsy*, of Kabarda experienced modest population growth as a result of Ukrainian peasants resettling and entering the ranks of the Cossacks.¹¹⁴ During this period the Terek Cossacks had more land at their disposal than they could manage.¹¹⁵ Despite Kabarda's abbreviated territory after the Russian conquest, the exponential decline in size of the Kabardian population negated much of the land pressures in the region. Indeed, as the Anzorov case demonstrated, Cossack colonization caused greater administrative legal problems than violent inter-communal conflict. This was because there was plenty of free land in Kabarda, but it was unclear who owned it. According to Irina Tkhamokova, an expert on Russian colonization in Kabarda, "having such great quantities of land, the [Cossack] system of land usage was very simple...each Cossack...exploited as much land he was able, as much as he wanted, wherever he wanted. However, [given their military service obligations] the farming capabilities of the Cossacks...of the North Caucasus were limited; therefore, they were only able to till a small portion of the land at their

¹¹⁴ Tkhamokova, *Russkoe i ukrainskoe naselenie Kabardino-Balkarii*. 31.

¹¹⁵ I.Kh. Tkhamokova, "Pozemel'nye otnosheniia v terskikh stanitsakh v XIX-XX vv.," in *Zemel'nye otnosheniia v Kabarde i Balkarii*, 72-73.

disposal.”¹¹⁶ The agricultural colonization of Kabarda by Russian, Ukrainian and other non-native peasant smallholders would only begin in earnest toward the end of the nineteenth century.

Lesser Kabarda: The Human Dumping Ground of the North Caucasus

Along with the Anzorov family land struggles, no region better exemplified the disrupted and uncertain state of land relations in the North Caucasus better than Lesser Kabarda. From the 1820s to the 1860s, the population of Lesser Kabarda, which had dramatically decreased as a result of war and disease during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, steadily increased through the tsarist administration’s numerous resettlement projects. The cultural-linguistic makeup of Lesser Kabarda became more diverse from the late-1840s on because the administration began to resettle mountaineers from strategic areas around the Georgian Military Highway and the fortress Vladikavkaz to Lesser Kabarda. These resettlements placed culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse populations within a relatively small and disease-prone region and led to a situation whereby disparate communities living side-by-side competed for access to a dwindling supply of land. Moreover, by issuing contradictory decrees and orders, the tsarist administration created a situation in which multiple communities could legally claim ownership rights to the same land. In 1865, in the middle of major land reforms in the central Caucasus’s Terek Oblast, Dmitrii Kodzokov, Chairman of the region’s Land Commission, characterized the problems of Lesser Kabarda:

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 73.

The district of Lesser Kabarda, as a result of wartime conditions..., the undetermined nature of property and land-use rights among the Kabardians, and....frequent contradictory orders, now has the most restive and mutually-hostile population in the North Caucasus...[its communities are] divided by history, foreign to each other by language, customs, and religion, and differ in economic needs and practices.¹¹⁷

With the fracturing of Kabarda between Lesser Kabarda and Greater Kabarda in the late-sixteenth century, two princely lines controlled Lesser Kabarda (i.e. the Kabardian domains east of the Terek and west of the Sunzha), the Tausultanis and Dzhylyakhstanis. The Dzhylyakhstan domains of the Mudarovs and the Akhlovs (Dzhylyakhstanei) were in the eastern portion of Lesser Kabarda from the Sunzha River to the Kurp River. The Tausultan domains (Talostanei) of the Sholokhovs, located between the Terek and Lesken rivers in the west and the Kurp in the east, formed the western portion of Lesser Kabarda.¹¹⁸

In the century between 1740 and 1840, the frontiers of Lesser Kabarda moved in a northwesterly direction, contracting to a fraction of their former size. The geo-political, social, and demographic changes occurring in the central Caucasus from the mid-eighteenth century on (feudal rivalries, mountaineer population growth and territorial expansion, and Russian colonization) weakened the Dzhylyakhstan princes earliest.¹¹⁹ First, Ingush societies moved north to Dzhylyakhstanei land from their cramped mountains, throwing off Kabardian suzerainty, and colonizing the right bank of the Sunzha River and its

¹¹⁷ "Doklad Komissii po pravam lichnym i pozemel'nym tuzemnogo naseleniia Terskoi oblasti. 4 oktaibria 1865 goda, No. 633," in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 101.

¹¹⁸ Beslaneev, 25.

¹¹⁹ A.B. Mamkhegov, "Kak malokabardinty utratili zemli kniazei Dzhylyakhstanovykh," *Arkhivy i obshchestvo* no. 3 (2007): 73-84.

tributaries.¹²⁰ Next, inter-feudal strife within Kabarda weakened the Dzhylakhstan princes.¹²¹ Kurgoko Konchokin, the imperiled Kabardian prince who sought Russian protection through baptism in the late 1750s and founded Mozdok in 1764, came from Dzhylakhstane. The founding of Mozdok created a platform for the expansion of Russian influence in Kabarda and the central Caucasus generally.¹²² In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Lesser Kabarda's auls suffered from punitive expeditions led by generals Jacobi, Fabritsian, Glazenap, and Bulgakov.¹²³ Tsarist armies burned down Kabardian auls and resettled communities from the banks of Sunzha and Kambileevka, settling Cossacks in their place. After the plague laid waste to much of Lesser Kabarda in the first decade of the nineteenth century and Ermolov resettled mountaineers to the Terek plains of Lesser Kabarda in the 1820s, Ossetians, Ingush, and Cossacks had colonized almost all of historic Dzhylakhstane. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century most of the remaining Dzhylakhstan families moved to the right bank of the Kurp—the border between Dzhylakhstane and Talostane—and, in the east, only three small auls remained on the rivulet Psedakha.¹²⁴ Then, by 1840, Ossetians colonized the eastern frontier of Talostane on the right bank of the Terek near Mount Zamankul.¹²⁵ By the end of the 1830s, the Lesser Kabarda's territory had been halved and

¹²⁰ Volkova, 159-60.

¹²¹ Begeulov, 137.

¹²² Beslaneev, 57-63.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹²⁵ P. A. Kuz'minov, "Agrarnye preobrazovaniia u narodov Tsentral'nogo Kavkaza v 50-60-e gody XIX veka." *Zemel'nye otnosheniia*, 53; See also A.B. Mamkhegov, "Zakat tausultanovykh Kabardy," *Arkhiv i obshchestvo* 5 (2008): 49-51.

its population—909 households living on 17 small auls—was a quarter of its former size.¹²⁶

As with much else in the central Caucasus, in order to understand the problems of inter-communal and land relations in Lesser Kabarda in the middle of the nineteenth century, it is necessary to go back to the period of rapid demographic change and migration in the 1820s, when Ermolov's armies conquered the region. By the mid-1820s, Lesser Kabarda, bordering the restive Chechen lands in the east, was only secured by an old line of fortresses along the Sunzha River. Moreover, the depopulation of Lesser Kabarda through military conquest and epidemic made Lesser Kabarda, in the words of Ermolov, "a convenient place for brigands and thieves and gave them the possibility to break through our borders or move forward into Greater Kabarda and conduct raids there and provoke disturbances." Moreover, Ermolov believed that the security problems posed by Lesser Kabarda "would become especially troublesome with the transfer...of [the Georgian Military Highway] along the left bank of the Terek and the abandonment of the currently occupied redoubts of Konstantinovskii and Elisavetinskii." In 1822, with these considerations in mind, Ermolov invited Colonel Fedor Aleksandrovich Bekovich-Cherkasskii to resettle with his auls to Lesser Kabarda and, in 1824, Ermolov provided him with the title to 265,980 acres (98,511 desiatins) of land here.¹²⁷ In 1825 the Committee of Ministers in St. Petersburg confirmed Bekovich-Cherkasskii's rights to this land.¹²⁸ Bekovich-Cherkasskii became the lord of the Kabardian auls located on his new

¹²⁶ Beslaneev, 91-92.

¹²⁷ "Vsepodannishee donosenie gen. Ermolova, ot 17-go sentiabria 1824 g.—Kabarda," in *AKAK, Tom VI chast' II*, 474-75.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 477.

lands and those of his dependents that he resettled with his family from the Kizliar region.¹²⁹ This latter category of newcomers included Kumyk, Chechen, and Kabardian serfs who paid feudal dues to the Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes. From the mid-1820s the population of Lesser Kabarda took on much greater ethno-linguistic diversity.¹³⁰

Beginning with Alexander Bekovich-Cherkasskii, Peter the Great's military advisor and ill-fated explorer of Central Asia, the Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes, who traced their lineage back to Greater Kabarda's Bekmurzin princes, earned fame and fortune for their military service to tsarist state. As a reward for his participation in Peter the Great's Persian Campaign in 1722, Alexander's younger brother, Elmurza, received land around the newly built fortress of Holy Cross (*Sviataia Krest'*), and when Empresses Anna Ivanovna moved Russia's fortress in the North Caucasus to Kizliar in 1735, Elmurza Bekovich-Cherkasskii resettled there with his serfs and family. The government gave Elmurza a large allotment of land and serfs in the Kumyk lands near Kizliar. Additionally, the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis owned the Cherkasskii quarter of Kizliar, where the town's Circassians and Caucasian mountaineers resided. Elmurza was instrumental in ensuring the pro-Russian orientation of his relatives in Kabarda during middle of the eighteenth century. Fedor Alexandrovich (Temir-Bulat Kaspulatovich), Elmurza's grandson, gained Ermolov's favor as his adjutant in 1816-17.¹³¹

In 1818, the Mudarov princely line that controlled Dzhylakhstanei (the eastern half of Lesser Kabarda) came to an end with the murder of Albakhsid Mudarov,

¹²⁹ Beslaneev, 73.

¹³⁰ Volkova, 209.

¹³¹ Beslaneev, 68-74.

providing Ermolov with a convenient solution to the security problem of Lesser Kabarda.¹³² By giving these lands to Fedor Bekovich-Cherkasskii, an educated member of the Kabardian elite whose loyalty to Russia was proven, Ermolov counted on the improvement of the security and general welfare of Lesser Kabarda. Ermolov hoped that Bekovich-Cherkasskii would “attract back to their former places of residence those who left Lesser Kabarda after the [plague] epidemic and settle them there in a permanent fashion” next to his auls from Kizliar. According to Ermolov, a repopulated Lesser Kabarda under the control of Bekovich-Cherkasskii, “would serve in future as a trustworthy defense against brigands in Kabarda.” Moreover, Ermolov continued, “the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis could be useful in gradually bringing enlightenment to the Kabardians and integrating them into the general order of the administration [of the Empire].” Finally, “colonel Bekovich-Cherkasskii and his brother, Ensign Efim Bekovich-Cherkasskii, ha[d], through their mother (born princess Konchokina), inheritance rights to the Mudarov lands on which they will be settled.”¹³³ The only hitch in Ermolov’s plan was that estates could not be inherited matrilineally and the real heirs to the Mudarov estate were Dzhyllakhstanei’s other princely family, the Akhlovs. According to the laws of time, Ermolov was justified in revoking the Akhlovs’ rights to these lands because the eldest Akhlov, Temriuk, was the leader of the anti-Russian movement in Lesser Kabarda before the Ermolov’s violent pacification of the region.¹³⁴

¹³² Mamkhegov, “Kak malokabardintsy utratili zemli,” 78.

¹³³ “Vsepodannishee donosenie gen. Ermolova,” 474-75.

¹³⁴ “1839 g. avgusta 22-go. Kopiia s kopi. Spisok s predpisaniiia komandira Otdel’nogo Kavkazskogo korpusa generala ot infanterii E.A. Golovina komanduiushchemu voiskami na Kavkazskoi linii i Chernomorii P.Kh. Grabbe otmezhevat’ podpolkovniku E. Bekovich-Cherkasskomu zemli do iuzhnoi

In 1822 prince Fedor Bekovich-Cherkasskii and his brother Efim established the villages of Kizilar, Kozdemir, Pshedakh, and Magomet-Iurt in Lesser Kabarda.¹³⁵ The residents of these new villages were not dependents of the lesser Kabardian Mudarov and Akhlov families; rather they were the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis' serfs from the Kilziar region. Moreover, lesser nobles and their serfs, former Mudarov vassals, who had fled the region during the recent insurrections, also moved back their former lands now under the control of the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis.

Far from creating the type of stability envisaged by Ermolov, between the 1830s and 1860s, competing claims to the Mudarov lands, unclear and contradictory decrees from the Caucasus administration over the ownership of these lands, and questions of the administrative and economic power of the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis, created legal and administrative chaos in the Dzhyldzhistan lands of Lesser Kabarda.¹³⁶ Ermolov not only made the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis the largest feudal lords of Lesser Kabarda by far, he also appointed them *pristavs* of Kabarda, a position that also gave them administration control of the region. The transfer of control of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii land to Fedor's brother Efim, after the former's death in 1832, weakened the Bekovich-Cherkasskii's omnipotence in Lesser Kabarda.¹³⁷ Unlike his brother, Efrim attracted the negative attention of the Caucasus administration by abusing his powers. Efim regarded all of the former Mudarov domains as his personal fiefdom, when, by customary law, he was

storony Kabardinskogo khrebta," in *Agrarnye otnosheniia u narodov severnogo kavkaza v rossiiskoi politike XVIII- nachala XX veka, tom II.*, ed. P.A. Kuz'minov (Nalchik: El'-Fa, 2008), 258-59.

¹³⁵ Volkova, 225.

¹³⁶ See documents in *Agrarnye otnosheniia u narodov Severnogo Kavkaza, Tom II.*, 247-357.

¹³⁷ Beslaneev, 73.

required to respect the feudal rights of other princes and nobles living on these lands.¹³⁸ By collecting land rents from serfs belonging to the Akhlov princes and other nobles of Dzhyldzhystane, Efim provoked a peasant rebellion in 1837. Additionally, Efim's attempts to collect land payments from neighboring Ingush caused inter-communal tensions. In 1837, the Caucasus administration forbade Efim from serving as *pristav* of Lesser Kabarda, where he was also the largest feudal lord.¹³⁹ In 1839, Commander of the Caucasus Corps, Golovin, also ruled that the Bekovich-Cherkasskii did not control all of the former Mudarov lands, because inheritance rights could not be passed matrilineally, rather Efim had rights only to those lands on which the Bekovich-Cherkasskii auls were located and could not collect payments from populations outside of those lands.¹⁴⁰ At the same time, however, Golovin issued Efim Bekovich-Cherkasskii with a title to all 265,980 acres of the Mudarov lands originally granted to him by Ermolov.¹⁴¹ For the next thirty years, this land became the subject of an intense legal dispute among the Bekovich-Cherkasskii, the Akhlovs, and other Kabardian families claiming inheritance rights to the Mudarov lands. The state's purchase of 106,150 acres (39,316 desiatins) from Efim Bekovich-Cherkasskii to provide land for the Sunzha Cossack Regiment and Ossetian

¹³⁸ Ibid., 114.

¹³⁹ "Zapiska o provedenii v izvestnost' granits zemli, prinadlezhashchei v Maloi Kabarde familii kniazei Bekovich-Cherkasskikh," in *AKAK, Tom VIII*, 667-69.

¹⁴⁰ "1839 g. avgusta 22-go. Kopii s kopi. Spisok s predpisanii komandira Otdel'nogo Kavkazskogo korpusa," 258-61.

¹⁴¹ "1863 g. iunია 10-go. Mnenie Komiteta po razboru lichnykh i pozemel'nykh prav gotsev Kabardinskogo okruga o zemliakh Bekovichei-Cherkasskikh dezavuiuiushchee predlozhenie grafa N.I. Evdokimova i dr.," in *Agrarnye otnosheniia u narodov Severnogo Kavkaza, Tom II*, 282-83

resettlers helped solidify the Bekovich-Cherkasskii's claims to the remainder of their land.¹⁴²

Lesser Kabarda took on greater cultural and linguistic diversity from the late-1840s on because the administration began to resettle mountaineer communities whom it deemed potentially hostile away from the strategic area around the Georgian Military Highway and the fortress Vladikavkaz to this part of Kabarda. The tsarist administration used the land freed up by these resettlements for new Cossack *stanitsy*. The Caucasus administration resettled communities to Lesser Kabarda as a temporary measure (until permanent land could be found for them) without providing them with a clear understanding of their land rights. In 1847, the military administration established the Sunzha Cossack *stanitsa* Magomet-Iurtovskaia on lands purchased from the Bekovich-Cherkasskii estate.¹⁴³ By 1848 the population of Lesser Kabarda included 11,400 Kabardians (14 villages belonging to the Bekovich-Cherkasskii, two Akhlov villages, and seven Talostanci villages), 1,400 Chechens (166 households living mainly in Psedakh), 64 Kumyk households living in Trulovo aul, 104 Ingush households resettled to Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands from the Nazran society, and two small Ossetian villages.¹⁴⁴ The rights of these settlers to surrounding lands remained unclear, which led to clashes with the neighboring population. On September 19, 1857, Musa Kundukhov, then *pristav* of Lesser Kabarda, reported on clashes between Lesser Kabardians and 276 households of Ossetian settlers. According to Kundukhov, "the settlers living there do not

¹⁴² Beslaneev, 120.

¹⁴³ "Report nachal'nika Vladikavkazskogo voennogo okruga general-maiora Il'inskogo ot 30 apreliia 1849 goda o neobkhodimosti sozdaniia v okruge komiteta dlia resheniia zemel'nogo i soslovnogo voprosov," in *Narody Tsentral'nogo Kavkaza*, Tom I, 157.

¹⁴⁴ Volkova, 64.

have the ability to use communal land in the same way as the Kabardians, with whom they have constant disagreements.”¹⁴⁵ In 1861, the administration of Terek Oblast resettled 80 Ingush households from the Terek plains to Keskem onto Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands, two years later there were 200 Ingush households on Keskem.¹⁴⁶ Finally, in the wake of land reforms among the Ossetians and Ingush, 1,500 households of Karabulak Ingush remained landless.¹⁴⁷ In the early 1860s, the administration temporarily resettled these Ingush households to Lesser Kabarda, where they formed the aul Ak-Barzoi.¹⁴⁸

In 1865, on the eve of the Peasant Reforms in Kabarda, Lesser Kabarda was divided among the following fiefdoms and cultural-linguistic communities. Talostanei—the western half of Lesser Kabarda, between the right-bank of the Terek and the left bank of the Kurp—included 15 Kabardian auls (with a population of 4,800) belonging to eleven noble families and six Ossetian auls. These Ossetians, numbering about 915 at the time, were a mix of Christians and Muslims. Their villages occupied 30,780 acres (11,400 desiatins) on the river Kuian. Dzhyllakhstanei had greater cultural and linguistic diversity. There were 14 Kabardian auls in Dzhyllakhstanei with a population of 4,451. 410 Kabardians also resided on the Bekovich-Cherkasskii auls along with 1,098 Kumyks and 377 Chechens. The Chechen aul Psedakh (204 households) and the Ingush auls Keskem (217 households), Sagopsh (54 households), and Ak-Barzoi (87 households),

¹⁴⁵“Raport pristava Maloi Kabardy maiora Kundukhova ot 19 sentiabria ot 1857 goda Komanduiushchemu voiskami levogo kryla Kavkazskoi voennoi linii general-leitenantu Evdokimovu o stolknoveniiakh mezhdia malokabardintsami i 276 dvorami pereselentsev,” in *Narody Tsentral’nogo Kavkaza*, Tom I, 191-92.

¹⁴⁶ Beslaneev, 132.

¹⁴⁷ “Doklad Komissii po pravam lichnym i pozemel’nym tuzemnogo naseleniia Terskoi oblasti, 4 oktiabria 1865 goda,” 102.

¹⁴⁸ Volkova, 223.

with a total population of about 3,000, were also located on Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands. Additionally, the Ingush auls Chirikovo and Bezevo (187 households), though residing in the neighboring Nazran (Ingush) society, had their farmland and meadowland on Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands.¹⁴⁹ The Kumyks, Chechens, and Kabardians of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii auls, as well as the Chechen aul Pshedakh, paid land rent (*iasak*) to the Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes. However, the Ingush, settled onto Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands more recently by order of the tsarist administration, did not pay the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis for the use of their land.¹⁵⁰

Disputes over land rent between the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis and the diverse communities who settled on the land claimed by the former grew increasingly heated in the mid-1860s as an increasing number of settlers competed for the small amount of arable land in Dzhyzhakhstane. In the late 1850s and early 1860s, as Land Commissions began preliminary deliberations on landownership rights in Kabarda, at least three groups staked competing claims to Lesser Kabardian lands. The Dzhyzhakhstan Kabardians—Kabardian families whose ancestors resided on the Mudarov and Akhlov lands before they were transferred to the ownership of the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis—based their rights to these lands on ancient Kabardian custom and claimed that the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis only owned the lands on which their estates and serfs were located. The Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes cited numerous documents from the 1820s and 1830s in their efforts

¹⁴⁹ “Vypiska s raporta nachal’nika Terskoi oblasti, pomoshchniku glavnokomanduiushchego kavkazskoiu armieiu, ot 6 dekabria 1865 goda za no. 3277-m” in *Territorii i rasselenie kabardintsev i balkartsev*, 110.

¹⁵⁰ “Doklad Komissii po pravam lichnym i pozemel’nym tuzemnogo naseleniia Terskoi oblasti, 4 oktiabria 1865 goda,” 104.

to prove that the vast majority of these lands had been gifted to them by Ermolov.¹⁵¹ The Ingush of Dzhyldzhystane and the Ossetians of Talostane claimed that the government gave them lands in Lesser Kabarda in exchange for their ancestral lands on which Cossack *stanitsy* had been established. Only the Kumyks and Chechens remained silent because they knew that they lived on Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands and their history of paying feudal land rent to the Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes could prove this.¹⁵² Ultimately, the government chose a solution to the “land chaos” and inter-communal tensions in Lesser Kabarda that involved what they hoped would be a final and permanent round of resettlements and territorial delimitations of Lesser Kabarda according to ethnic categories. This solution, described in chapter three, led to the last major reduction of Lesser Kabarda’s territory until World War Two and highlights the ways in which ethnicity as a category was becoming more important and more activated and instrumentalized in the colonial situation of the late-imperial era.

The Politics of Pasturage: The Mountain Pastures and Colonial Policies

If the land question in Lesser Kabarda troubled the tsarist administration the most, the status of the mountain pastures between the upper Malka and Zolka rivers in the south and Kuma in the north (i.e. the trans-Malka and Zolka pastures) worried the Kabardian people the most. The mountain pastures, forming Kabarda’s historic western and northwestern borderlands with the Karachai and Abaza, was a vast territory of rolling

¹⁵¹ “1864 g. maia 16-go. Kopia. Usloviia, na kotorykh doverennyi F. E. Bekovicha-Cherkasskogo, otstavnoi maior A.Kh. Artem’ev soglasen ustupit’ gosudarstvu zemli Bekovichei,” in *Agrarnye otnosheniia u narodov Severnogo Kavkaza, Tom II*, 300-01.

¹⁵² “Otchet o deiatel’nosti Komissii po razboru lizhnykh i pozemel’nykh prav tuzemtsev,” 179.

hills interspersed with dozens of rivers and streams. Cool, lush and verdant with alpine meadow grasses, and free of mosquitoes in the summer, at the peak of their prosperity, Kabardians thrived by using these summer pastures in their extensive cattle and horse breeding. Between May and September, shepherds from all over Kabarda would spend the summer with their flocks and herds on these pastures. For the remaining eight months of the year, this land was barren and often snow-covered. As a result, even in their most climatically moderate parts, the mountain pastures were sparsely settled.¹⁵³ Before Russian conquest, control of the summer pastures facilitated Kabardian dominance over neighboring Abaza and Karachai communities. Key to Russia's conquest of Kabarda was its ability to limit and, at times, fully cut off Kabardians' access to their mountain pastures. By ending Kabarda's control over much of these pastures after the first major Kabardian revolt in 1779, and then restricting access to this land at key moments during the next forty-five years of conquest, the Russian Army was able to end Kabarda's power over neighboring communities, prevent collusion between Kabardians and hostile communities across the Kuban, physically weaken the Kabardian people during the plague, and deprive Kabardians of safe havens from tsarist armies. Ermolov's resettlement of all Kabardian auls located between the Kuma and Malka rivers south to the plains on the Malka's right bank and the establishment of fortification lines throughout this mountain zone, was the final act in Russia's expropriation of Kabarda mountain pastures. In September, 1824, Ermolov reported: "In order to achieve the goal [of pacifying Kabarda] on the borders of the trans-Kuban peoples, auls located between

¹⁵³ For a discussion of the Kabarda's mountain pastures and their importance see Mesiats, 139-48.

the rivers Kuma and Malka were resettled to the right bank of the latter river, and in the lands between both rivers in all places where there are roads that are passable, military posts and fortresses have been established.”¹⁵⁴

After Ermolov’s conquest, Kabardians viewed the return of this pasture land to their permanent control as the solution to their economic recovery. Of particular concern were the Zolka pastures. At lower elevation than the rest of the mountain pastures, Kabardians drove their cattle on these pastures along rolling hills between the Zolka and Etoko rivers in early summer and early autumn, when snow prevented the use of the trans-Malka pastures higher in the mountains.¹⁵⁵ The status of the highland mountain pastures between the Malka and Kichmalka rivers was undetermined because, while the state forbade Kabardians from residing on this land and access to this land depended on permission from the administration of the Caucasus Cordon Line, the Caucasus administration never officially transferred this land to Cossack ownership. On the other hand, Ermolov gave the Zolka pastures to the Volga Cossacks of the Caucasus Line, preventing Kabardian use of this land.¹⁵⁶

In 1827, immediately after Nicholas I and Field Marshall Ivan Paskevich forced Ermolov out of his position as Commander-in-Chief in the Caucasus, Kabardian representatives travelled to Tiflis and petitioned the Caucasus administration to reverse the losses that Kabarda had suffered during Ermolov’s reign. In addition to requesting permission to continue to collect tribute from their Ossetian neighbors and demanding the

¹⁵⁴ “Vsepodannishee donosenie gen. Ermolova, ot 17-go sentiabria 1824 g.—Kabarda,” 474.

¹⁵⁵ On the Zolka pastures see again Mesiats, 139-48.

¹⁵⁶ “Doklad o razgranichenii zemel’ mezhdru kabardintsami i prochimi obshchestvami. 24 oktiabria 1863 g.,” in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 94.

dissolution of the Kabardian Temporary Court, chief among the Kabardian requests was a return of the mountain pastures and the salt lake (Tambukan) located on the northern edge of the Zolka pastures.¹⁵⁷ After refusing all of the Kabardians' main requests, on January 2, 1828, the Commander of the Armies of the Caucasus Line, General Emanuel, approved the allotment of lake Tambukan and 2,808 acres (1,040 desiatins) surrounding this salt lake to the Kabardian people.¹⁵⁸ While this lake was an important watering ground for livestock, its importance to Kabardian shepherds was largely negated by the administration's refusal to return any of the pasturage beyond the river Malka to the Kabardian ownership. Emanuel, Paskevich and others in the administration argued that the security imperatives that prompted Ermolov to forbid Kabardians from residing in the mountains ("beyond the Malka") still existed.¹⁵⁹ In particular, viceroy Paskevich argued that "it is necessary to forbid the Kabardians from settling in the upper reaches of rivers because the Karachai, Chechens, Balkars...and other mountaineers...would again fall subject to the Kabardian yoke as close neighbors who must cross through their lands; conflicts and disagreements would not cease and illegal acts would only increase again."¹⁶⁰ General Emanuel dismissed the Kabardians' humanitarian concerns, stating that "Kabardians could just as easily keep their cattle in the plains as in the mountains."¹⁶¹ Ignorance of transhumance livestock breeding and a desire, based on security concerns and conceptions of civilizational progress, to fully sedentarize the Kabardians into agriculturalists also lay behind the administration's refusal.

¹⁵⁷ "Otnoshenie gr. Dibicha k gen. Paskevichu," 863-64.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 870.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 863-74.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 870.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 866.

The Kabardians' access to their mountain pastures decreased as the local Cossack military administration, whose job it was to guard this land, gradually began to assume landlord rights over the Kabardian lands beyond the Malka. Cossacks began to illegally collect payments from Kabardians for use of the pastures.¹⁶² The elites of Greater Kabarda used the occasion of Emperor Nicholas's tour of the Caucasus in 1837 to renew their requests for the return of their summer pastures. Complaining that "the land owned by them...is completely insufficient for both agriculture and pasturage and that they are suffering heavy losses," the Kabardians requested the rights to the Zolka and mountain pastures. In a case of Cossacks' defending their entrenched interests, Commander of the Armies of the Caucasus Line, Lieutenant-General Pavel Grabbe, reported to Evgenii Golovin, then Viceroy of the Caucasus, that "the land requested by the Kabardians cuts too deeply into the domains of the Volga Cossack regiment....moreover, on this land, a Cossack *stanitsa* could easily be constructed; and the Malka should remain the border between unintegrated Kabarda and the Caucasus oblast." On August 22, 1839, Golovin, "deeming satisfactory these reasons for the harm that would come from giving this land to the Kabardians," ordered that the Kabardians' petition be denied and that the land be given to Cossacks.¹⁶³ Learning of this denial of their requests, in September 1840, the Kabardians lodged a new petition describing their extreme lack of land in and complained that additional land was being taken from them for military settlements around Nalchik Fortress. In November, Golovin conceded that the Kabardians should be

¹⁶² "Doklad o razgranichenii zemel' mezhdru kabardintsami i prochimi obshchestvami. 24 oktiabria 1863 g.," in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 94.

¹⁶³ "Doklad o zemle mezhdru Etokoiu i Zolkoiu, kotoruiu kabardintsy trebuiut otdat' v ikh pol'zovanie. 24 noiabria 1842 goda, No. 46, g. Stavropol'," in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 53-54.

compensated for their loss of land by granting them with their desired pasture land on the Zolka. However, in deference to the wishes of the Cossack administration of the Cordon Line, Golovin argued that “the existence of...auls inside the Cordon Line would be very inconvenient and could impede the establishment of order and peace in our borders and prevent us from populating this part of the line with Russian population.”¹⁶⁴ Rather than permanently returning the Zolka pastures to the Kabardians, on February 4, 1841, “in order to quiet their concerns,” Golovin decreed to “allow the Kabardians each year to use the land between the Zolka and Etoko without any payment.”¹⁶⁵

In 1844, during a visit to St. Petersburg to receive an honorary banner from the tsar in recognition of the Kabardian people’s loyalty and service to the Empire, the Kabardian delegation again petitioned Nicholas I for the return of their former pasture land. On January 31, 1845, Minister of War, Alexander Chernyshev, informed Viceroy Vorontsov that the Emperor had approved the transfer to Kabardian ownership of 121,500 acres beyond the Malka River (i.e. within the Cordon Line), including the Zolka summer pastures. The new commander of the Armies of the Caucasus Line, Nikolai Zavadovskii, immediately protested this decision, citing security concerns and Cossack economic interests. Zavadovskii ordered an investigation into the merit of the Kabardians’ request. Fortunately for the military administration, which did not want to give this Cossack land back to Kabardians, this investigation coincided with Shamil’s incursion into Kabarda. In writing to the Emperor on the Kabardian land question in the summer 1846, Viceroy

¹⁶⁴“Vypiska iz del, po predmetu ustroistva Nalchikskogo voennogo poseleniia i o pritiiazaniakh kabardintsev na zemliu, lezhashchuiu mezhdru pechkami Zolkuu i Etokoiu. 25 oktiabria 1842 goda g. Stavropol’,” in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 50.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

Vorontsov sided with Zavadovskii and cited the disloyal behavior of many Kabardians during Shamil's recent incursion as further evidence of the folly of granting Kabardians ownership of pasture lands near the Caucasus Line.¹⁶⁶ The state would only grant the Kabardians temporary pasturage rights to the Zolka and mountain pastures beyond the River Malka. The status of Kabarda's pastures would remain unresolved and no further changes would be made to their status until the late 1850s and 1860s when the land question was raised again in connection with the transformation of the Caucasus administration after the Caucasian Wars and the beginning of the Peasant Reforms.

The question of the mountain pastures also caused disputes between Kabardians and their Karachai neighbors to the west. The Karachai of the mountainous upper-Kuban region, like their Balkar cousins, relied almost exclusively on stockbreeding for their survival. During the summer, many Karachai communities drove their cattle to pasture on the western part of Kabarda's trans-Malka mountain pastures, between the Kichmalka and Kuma Rivers. Kabarda's historic dominance over these Karachai was based on control of their summer pastures. After Russia's conquest of Kabarda, the Karachai began freely using pastures for which they formerly rendered tribute to Kabarda's princes.¹⁶⁷ Now both Karachais and Kabardians used the pastures at the pleasure of the Cordon Line administration. Moreover, the Karachai began to expand their use of these pastures and

¹⁶⁶ N.D. Gaibov, *O pozemel'nom ustroistve gorskikh plemen Terskoi oblasti*, 1905 repr. in *Agrarnye otnosheniia u narodov Severnogo Kavkaza tom II*, 66-67.

¹⁶⁷ R.U. Tuganov, *Istoriia obshchestvennoi mysli kabardinskogo naroda v pervoi polovine XIX veka* (Nalchik: El'-Fa, 1998), 292.

petition the government for permanent rights these lands, now controlled by the Cossack armies of the Kislovodsk Line.¹⁶⁸

This expansion of the Karachais' use of swaths of Kabarda's historic pastures provoked conflict with Kabardians. Each community attempted to assert their rights to these pastures by driving off and stealing livestock from the other.¹⁶⁹ As the Caucasian Wars wound down after the capture of Shamil in 1858, the government replaced the wartime administrative divisions of the North Caucasus with three oblasts—Kuban, Terek, and Dagestan; these were modified versions of the standard administrative division of the empire. As far as the government was concerned, in separating the Karachai and Kabardians between Kuban and Terek oblasts respectively in 1860, it resolved the question of who had the right to use the mountain pastures.¹⁷⁰ According to a decree from April 20, 1851, the border would run along the Kuma River so that the vast pastures of the Kislovodsk Line fell within the jurisdiction of Terek Oblast.¹⁷¹ As residents of Terek Oblast, Kabardians gained usage rights to all of these lands at the expense of the Karachai, the vast majority of whom resided in Kuban Oblast. The only exception was Terek Oblast's small Karachai minority; they also had the rights to the mountain pastures. Despite this seeming resolution of Karachai-Kabardian dispute over the summer mountain pastures, tensions remained high between the two groups and

¹⁶⁸ “Predpisanie nachal’nika Sshtaba Otdel’nogo Kavkazskogo korpusa ot 27 avgusta 1850 goda general vrevskomu o razreshenii konflikta mezhdru vladel’tsami i ikh podvladtnymi i vydache im aktov na potomstvennoe vladenie zemliami,” in *Narody Tsentral’nogo Kavkaza, Tom I*, 204-05.

¹⁶⁹ “Prikazy po Kavkazskoi armii No. 466 noiabria 28 dnia 1859 goda – v gor. Tiflise,” in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 87-88.

¹⁷⁰ *Istoriia Karachaevo-Cherkessii*, 415.

¹⁷¹ “Prikazy po Kavkazskoi armii No. 466,” 88.

border conflicts would break out sporadically into the late-1920s. On a practical level, these tensions manifested themselves in cycles of cattle and sheep raiding.

The Balkars: Continuity and Change in Symbiotic Relations

Given their continued isolation from Russia, persistent encirclement by Kabardians, and their relatively small population (roughly one-fifth that of Kabarda), the Balkars' (the five mountaineer societies of Kabarda) historic relationship with Kabarda remained relatively stable during the period of Russian conquest in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, despite the changes brought on elsewhere by colonization. It was only after Ermolov's conquest in the mid-1820s that the Balkar peasants and nobles (*taubiis*) began to extend their territory and assert their independence at the expense of a defeated and still-suffering Kabarda. After the conquest of Kabarda, large swaths of pasturage on the Kabardian foothills and plains lay vacant and unclaimed. These were lands that Balkar shepherds had traditionally rented from Kabardian princes for cattle grazing during the autumn and spring. However, the combined effects of war and plague reduced the population of Kabarda by as much as 84 percent. Many Kabardian nobles, having fought against the tsarist state, fled their domains and crossed the Kuban River to live among the western Circassian tribes who would remain beyond Russian control for another three decades. Given the absence of their former feudal lords, Balkars continued

to use these lands, now rent-free, and, according to some sources, settle on these lands permanently.¹⁷²

The Caucasus administration repeatedly denied Balkar requests for free access to Kabardian land and intervention to end to their historic tributary relationship. Despite refusing to allow the surviving Kabardian elites to renew their tributary relations with neighboring Ossetian communities after Ermolov's conquest, the Caucasus administration did not want to further antagonize the pacified Kabardians by also ending their enduring economic dominance over their Balkar neighbors. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the military's policies had been aimed at ending Kabarda's dominance over its eastern Ossetian and Ingush neighbors. Therefore, on the one hand, the Caucasus administration did not want to see its success among Ossetian and Ingush communities reversed. In responding to a Kabardian petition calling for a return of their right to collect tribute from Ossetian communities, General Emmanuel reasoned that "the more relations the Caucasian peoples have with each other, the more unruly they become...therefore, I do not find a change of the current relations between Kabardians and Ossetians conducive to maintaining current conditions."¹⁷³ On the other hand, the Caucasus administration could not push policies of weakening Kabardian influence any further for fear of jeopardizing the hard won peace in the strategic Center of the Caucasus Line.

¹⁷² Kh. M. Dumanov, "Da, byla granitsa!," in *Vymysel i istina*, eds. I.M. Borei et al., (Piatigorsk: RIA-KMV, 2010), 308-09.

¹⁷³ "Otnoshenie gr. Dibicha k gen. Paskevichu, ot 4-go fevralia 1829 goda, No. 425," 867.

The Caucasus administration generally supported surviving Kabardian nobles in their bids to retain their economic dominance over their Balkar neighbors. In 1850, the Kabardian high noble (*tlekotlesh*), Batyrbek Tambiev complained to the Caucasus administration that “according to the established order those with the means to do so must give him one sheep for the use of his land and the residents of the Balkar, Urusbii, and Khulam mountaineer societies are not fulfilling this obligation.”¹⁷⁴ The Commander of the Center of the Caucasus Line, Major-General Georgii Eristov ordered Major Khoruev, *pristav* of the Balkar, Khulam, Bezengi, Chegem, and Urusbii societies (i.e. Balkaria), to ensure that peasants from these societies pay the Tambiev nobles for the use of their land.¹⁷⁵ In 1853, having taken oaths of allegiance and become subjects of the tsar in 1827, a delegation of nobles from Kabarda’s five mountaineer societies visited Nicholas I to express their loyalty, reaffirm their noble status, and petition for ownership rights to the lands in the Kabardian foothills that they had been using. However, in another example of the state refusing to interfere in Kabardino-Balkar relations, with the Kabardian resistance pacified by this time, the tsar denied this latter request, citing the continued inclusion of these lands within Kabardian noble domains.¹⁷⁶ The Balkars joined the Russian Empire too late to profit from Kabarda’s lands. With Kabarda pacified, it was no longer in the state’s interest to support claims—no matter how justified they were—to

¹⁷⁴ “1850 g. fevralia 13.—Predpisanie nachal’nika Tsentra Kavkazskoi linii Eristova pristavu Khoruevu o ponuzhdenii krest’ian Balkarskogo, Urusbievskogo i Khulamskogo obshchestv k neseniiu povinnosti Tambievu,” in *Dokumenty po istorii Balkarii 40-90 gg. XIX v.* ed. E.O. Krikunova (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1959), 27.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ “1852 g. dekabria 18.—Dokladnaia zapiska kantseliarii voennogo ministra ministru ‘ob otpravlenii deputasii ot gorskikh plemen v Peterburg’ I vozmozhnosti udovletvoreniia ee prosb’ o pribavlenii Balkarii zemli i naimenovanii starshin taubiiami,” in *Territoria i rasselenie*, 83-84

land belonging to the now-loyal Kabardian nobility. However, after the establishment of relative peace in the North Caucasus by the early 1860s, the conducting of thorough-going land reforms in Kabarda would address the Balkars' demands by ending the Kabardian nobility's monopoly on Kabarda's lands and placing these lands under the complete control of the tsarist administration.

Conclusion

The cases of the Anzorov lands, Lesser Kabarda, and the mountain pastures (involving Karachai, Balkars, and Kabardians) demonstrate how Russian security policies during the Caucasian Wars affected inter-communal relations in the pacified central Caucasus. The disputes over the Anzorov lands highlight how the redirection of the Georgian Military Highway through Kabarda for security purposes intensified Kabardian-Cossack relations. The establishment of Cossack settlements along the Georgian Military Highway and, in particular, the transfer of Kabardian land to Cossack control, created new tensions between Cossack and Kabardian communities. But, the expropriation of noble lands for these new settlements was more significant in its exacerbation of social and land tensions within Kabardian society, and Kabardian-Cossack relations, relative to Cossack-mountaineer relations elsewhere in the region, remained mostly peaceful. The case of Lesser Kabarda demonstrates how tsarist population politics—e.g. the policy of resettling mountaineers to the plains—produced new land tensions between Kabardians and their neighbors. Finally, the case of the mountain pastures highlights how administrative transformations and border delimitation disrupted long-standing inter-communal land

tenure arrangements and, by unintentionally favoring one community over another, caused inter-communal conflict.

The cases in this chapter also demonstrate that Russia's difficulties in administering the territory of Kabarda and adjudicating land disputes were the result of at least three factors. First, the devastating tsarist conquest wrought chaos upon the pre-colonial patterns of land-use and landownership and the Russian administration could not initially offer anything to replace it. Second, while sometimes deferring to Kabardian custom to determine land rights, at other times, as was the case with the mountain pastures, the tsarist military administration in the Caucasus treated land as "state patrimony" and dispensed with it as it saw fit. This created further confusion about the use, possession, and ownership of land. Third, the tsarist's state's most frequent response to security concerns was to use resettlement as a means of maintaining security, by removing untrustworthy populations and replacing them with loyal Cossacks and other groups. This population politics produced a panoply of unintended and unwanted consequences: inter-communal and intra-communal tensions and, sometimes, open conflict over land; mistrust of and hostility toward the tsarist state; and added complexities to traditional patterns of land tenure. These consequences of tsarist resettlement policies impeded the colonial state's ability to pursue its other goals for the region: the integration of the central Caucasus into the administrative and legal structure of the empire; and, most importantly and urgently, the establishment of effective administration and good governance, the primary justifications, as in other colonial situations, for tsarist sovereignty over the peoples of the Caucasus.

Given these impediments to tsarist goals for the region, it unsurprising that thorough-going land reform became the tsarist administration's main priority as the Caucasian Wars wound down in the late 1850s and early 1860s. As was the case throughout the empire, the land and peasant reforms after the 1860s in the North Caucasus, created more problems than they solved. Tsarist administrators, educated society (*obshchestvo*), and the peasantry spent the last fifty years of the tsarist period in search of a solution to "the land question." Given Caucasia's cultural-linguistic diversity and social stratification, these tensions surrounding land reform and colonization sometimes led to conflict between different cultural-linguistic communities. In the Kabardian lands and most surrounding areas of the central Caucasus, the land reforms, while certainly affecting relations among different communities, led to social contradictions that were more intra-communal than inter-communal in nature. As we continue to strive to understand the effects of tsarist policies on Kabarda and the societies of the central Caucasus and their relations with each other, it is to the fraught process of land reform and its consequences that we turn to in the next chapter.

Chapter 3:

Colonization, Inter-Communal Relations, and Imperial Integration: Kabarda and its Neighbors from Reform to Revolution, 1861-1917

Throughout the diverse borderlands of the Russian Empire in the late-imperial period, a growing impulse toward imperial integration, standardization and various forms of Russification—administrative, legal, cultural, linguistic—characterized tsarist policies. These policies, which were consequences of the post-Great-Reforms-era push toward modernization in an autocratic political context, were well at work in the North Caucasus during the late-imperial period.¹ After years of violent social and political upheaval and imperial conquest, the early 1860s marked the first time that tsarist officials could start to go beyond immediate security concerns and move toward schemes for the socio-economic and cultural transformation of their diverse but uncultivated human garden in the North Caucasus. This chapter examines how these tsarist policies, which exhibited (as they often did throughout the empire) a tension in their shifting emphases between security and social stability on the one hand and economic modernization on the other, affected social life within and among Kabardian, mountaineer, Cossack, and European settler communities during the late-imperial period.

¹ Kappeler, 248-82.

As in many other parts of the empire, the peasant reforms (i.e. the abolition of serfdom), attendant land reforms (the transformation of landownership and tenure practices in response to the need to provide newly liberated peasants with land), and resultant peasant migrations, were the key events that structured social and economic changes in the central Caucasus during the late-imperial period. By examining the peasant and land reforms in the central Caucasus, with particular focus on Kabarda and its five mountaineer societies (Balkaria), and their long-term consequences, this chapter provides insight into the nature and functioning of tsarist imperial rule, tsarist social engineering, and the intersecting categories of class, ethnicity, and territory in the late-imperial period.

During the 1860s, great official debate, often inter-ministerial, surrounded the question of proper land tenure and property rights for Kabarda and its neighbors. Some officials argued in favor of an expansion of the state domain at the expense of former Kabardian princely and noble fiefdoms and the establishment of communal land tenure for Kabardian village societies as a means of enhancing the economic conditions of the peasantry. Others called for enshrining the private property rights of Kabarda's nobility as a means of promoting the interests and fostering the loyalty of the region's ruling class, encouraging Russian colonization, and stimulating economic development.² These debates in the central Caucasus reflect empire-wide debates in the post-reform era about the best ways to promote colonization and social stability and the relative importance and

² These debates were similar to the ones going in Transcaucasia and Turkestan. See Pravilova., 361-83.

compatibility of these two goals.³ These debates also demonstrate the ways in which both social and cultural-linguistic statuses, which often intersected because the social structure of the central Caucasus was “ethnically” stratified, are crucial to understanding social life and conflict in the multiethnic borderlands of late-imperial Russia.

Many of the statist policies and processes for integrating the societies of the North Caucasus into the empire traditionally fall under the heading of “Russification”: the imposition of Russian language, culture, social structure, and administrative-political institutions on non-Russian communities. Scholars have recently problematized the concept of Russification. They have shown that “Russification” lacks specificity. Depending on time and place (“situation” in Aleksei Miller’s terms),⁴ a variety of often opposing processes and policies can be understood by the term “Russification.”⁵ Any given form of Russification could often have some very non-Russifactory components and produce results that worked against other forms of Russification. Moreover, in terms of “administrative Russification,” the legal and administrative norms that the tsarist state was trying to spread throughout the empire had little in common with those of the

³For an empire-wide discussion on migration policy see Charles Steinwedel, “Resettling People, Unsettling the Empire: Migration and the Challenge of Governance, 1861-1917,” in *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, eds. Nicholas B Breyfogle, Abby M Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (London: Routledge, 2007), 128-47.

⁴Alexei Miller, “Between Local and Inter-Imperial,” 7-26.

⁵Idem, “Russifikatsiia—klassifitsirovat’ i poniat’,” *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2002): 133-48; Theodore Weeks, “Russification: Word and Practice, 1863-1914,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 148, no. 4 (2004): 471-89; idem., *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia. Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1917* (DeKalb: University of North Illinois Press, 1996); Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East. National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Darius Staliunas, *Making Russians. Meaning and Practice of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus After 1863* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007); Paul W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia’s Volga-Kama Region, 1827-1905* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

Russian village, which was still governed by customary law.⁶ The fact that non-Russians were often responsible for both devising and carrying out statist policies associated with Russification has led to a reexamination of what we mean when we describe the empire as “Russian” and its policies as “Russification.”⁷ In Terek Oblast—the administrative division that included Kabarda from 1860 on—many of the officials behind the Peasant and Land Reforms were non-Russian “people of empire” often of Georgian and Armenian heritage.⁸ As Austin Jersild demonstrates, the tsarist state, viewing the former Christian kingdoms south of the Caucasus range as more “advanced” than the mountaineer tribal societies to the north, often relied on representatives of the Transcaucasian ruling elites—Georgian and, less frequently, Armenian nobles—to govern and “bring civilization” via Orthodoxy to the North Caucasus.⁹

Russia’s approach to governing the North Caucasus fits a larger pattern of empires embedding their subject peoples within civilizational hierarchies and assigning representatives certain positions within the empire according to these perceived differences.¹⁰ Of course, men like Mikhail Loris-Melikov (Armenian), Grigorii Orbeliani (Georgian), and Georgii Eristov (Georgian), while retaining their ties to their native land and, importantly for the tsarist administration, knowledge of the societies and cultures of the Caucasus, had thoroughly embraced Russian educated society and high culture

⁶ Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*, 91-92; Jane Burbank, *Russian Peasants go to Court: Legal Culture in the Countryside, 1905-1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 5-10.

⁷ On the multiethnic nature of empire’s ruling elite and its implication for how we think about the empire see Stephen M. Norris and Willard Sunderland, introduction to *Russia’s People of Empire*, 1-15.

⁸ I borrow this phrase from *ibid.*

⁹ See Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*, 147 and *passim*.

¹⁰ See, for example, Donald Horowitz’s discussions of “the ethnic distribution of colonial opportunity,” “colonial policy and the promotion of group disparity,” and “colonial evaluations of imputed group character,” in *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 151-66.

through education in the empire's best schools and military academies.¹¹ It was with ideas formed within the European cultural milieu of St. Petersburg and Moscow that these men of empire approached their task of reforming the societies and administrative-territorial structure North Caucasus.

The local knowledge and ties of these Transcaucasian elites had its limits. The tsarist administration, like most colonial administrations, relied on native elites as vital intermediaries and sources of information. Often, these native elites, torn between the interests of their own society and the demands of the imperial service, were forced to make bitter choices. At the center of the first half of this chapter is just such a man: Dmitrii Magometovich Kodzokov, a scion of the Kabardian lesser-nobility who, through a series of unlikely circumstances, rose to become the head of the commission in charge of land reform in Terek Oblast. In many ways, however, Kodzokov was more than simply a local intermediary for the colonial regime. Kodzokov hoped to use his powerful position to implement his own vision for social reform that was formed out of his long exposure and devotion to the slavophile ideals of Aleksei Khomiakov, his godfather and close friend. Kodzokov's seemingly improbable story reveals the intricate webs of imperial connections that wove together Russia's multi-cultural elite society.

The institutionalization and territorialization of ethnicity during the late-imperial period discussed in this chapter played an important role in reifying ethnic categories in the North Caucasus. In its conducting of the land reforms and the attendant administrative-territorial restructuring, the tsarist state institutionalized ethnicity as a

¹¹ See, for example, Pollock, "As One Russian to Another."

category and embedded it in its forms of governmentality. Jersild argues that because Russian colonial administrators, like their Soviet successors, believed that all peoples (*narody*) should possess a historic homeland, in the late-imperial period, “imperial territorial distinctions more or less corresponded to such a notion of a territorially defined and homogenous ethnic identity.”¹² Therefore, Jersild continues, “by the late nineteenth century, all Russians in the Caucasus associated the mountaineers with particular cultural traditions, languages, histories, and a bounded territory.”¹³ However, despite the tsarist state’s ethnicized approach to administration, at the end of the tsarist era, ethnic categories were far from supplanting other affiliations, such as those of religion and class or estate.

In addition to the general belief in the existence of clearly defined ethnic homelands, as Jersild demonstrates, tsarist administrators also saw the separation of mountaineer communities into distinct administrative-territorial units as a form of security through exclusion.¹⁴ If mountaineer communities could be separated from one another and from non-indigenous communities, the tsarist administration, it was believed, could better perform its policing functions.

Through three broad policy endeavors—1) the Peasant Reforms (i.e. the serf emancipation), 2) Land Reforms (i.e. reforms aimed at integrating the region’s land tenure practices into those of the empire and directed towards allocating land to emancipated serfs), and 3) administrative-territorial transformations in the central

¹² Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*, 85.

¹³ Ibid., 84

¹⁴ Ibid., 86.

Caucasus during the 1860s and 1870s—the tsarist state demolished the old system of princely fiefdoms—a system, as the label suggests, in which social-estate and class differences had far more salience than cultural and linguistic differences. Tsarist conquest, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, had already transformed this old system of social and land relations beyond recognition, but the reform era ended them. This is not to say that these reforms ended the strong supra-ethnic ties that had historically characterized central Caucasian society. These ties remained particularly strong among the central Caucasus’s nobility through the end of the tsarist period. Thus, the reform-era put an end to the last vestiges of the old feudal system in the central Caucasus. But it had not yet replaced it with a patchwork of ethnically defined nations. However, the territorializing of ethnicity and embedding of ethnicity in the forms of tsarist governmentality, though incomplete, laid the groundwork for later Soviet nation building.

Administrative-territorial changes and land reforms in the late-imperial era ended some intercommunal relationships while strengthening others. By placing most of the Ossetian and Ingush villages that were still located on Kabardian noble lands in 1860 outside of the administrative-territorial borders of Kabarda (and transforming these former noble estate lands into communal lands for these Ingush and Ossetian peasant societies), these transformations led to a further weakening of Kabardian influence upon Ingush and Ossetian communities. On the other hand, by placing Kabardians and Balkars (or the five mountaineer societies of Kabarda, as the latter were then known), within a common district, providing landless Balkars with Kabardian lands in the foothills, and

legally enshrining the shared use of the trans-Malka mountain pastures among Kabardian and Balkar village societies, tsarist policies in the late-imperial era ensured the continuance of the close economic and political relationship between these communities. Finally, a confluence of factors—the land reforms of in Kabarda, the emancipation of Russia's serfs and the resultant lack of land among the latter, the construction of railways, new legislation on residency and migration—led to Terek Oblast becoming a site of peasant immigration from central Russia, Ukraine, and other regions by the 1880s. In Nalchik District, as the remaining territory of Kabarda and the five mountaineer societies had become known by 1888, increased peasant migration did not exacerbate social and inter-communal tensions as it did in other regions of the North Caucasus. Rather, increased peasant migration strengthened the largely peaceful cultural and economic ties between Kabardians and Russians.

Toward a Land and Peasant Reform Project

By the 1860s, numerous factors made land reform the top priority of both the post-war North Caucasus administration and the region's war-weary population.¹⁵ First, the chaotic and contested state of landownership and usage made administering the region's disparate cultural-linguistic communities and adjudicating disputes between and within these communities difficult. These were critical issues because Russia, like most modern empires, justified its imperial sovereignty on its ability to bring more just administration

¹⁵For an extended discussion of the reasons for the land reforms in the North Caucasus see P.A. Kuz'minov, "Agrarnaia i sotsial'naia politika rossiiskogo pravitel'stva v Kabarde i Balkarii v 50-70-e gody XIX veka," in *Agrarnye otnosheniia, Tom II*, 496-501.

and laws to its colonized peoples. Second, among the region's native communities, these same conditions bred hostility and resistance toward the tsarist administration and led to reluctance among native communities to invest in their land. Moreover, if the pacified communities of the North Caucasus, such as Kabarda, had long voiced demands for reforms that would confirm their land ownership rights and enshrine the territorial borders of their societies, these demands only grew louder with the end of active military operations. Aleksandr Bariatinskii, Viceroy of the Caucasus from 1856 to 1862, recognized that "with the conclusion of the war in the Caucasus...and [the emergence of] the...possibility of focusing on agriculture and economic development...the determination of rights to ownership and use of farmland became the main life goal of every mountaineer."¹⁶ Administrators also viewed the unresolved state of the land question as one of the factors (after military conquest) promoting the exodus of Caucasians to the Ottoman Empire. Many in the Caucasus administration viewed that the exodus of peoples from the Caucasus, especially long-pacified communities like Kabardians, as a public relations disaster for the Empire and an economic loss.¹⁷ Third, land reforms could promote colonization of north Caucasia by Russian peasants after their emancipation.¹⁸ According to tsarist officials, colonization would, in turn, promote security and the long-term goal of cultural russification. By surveying the region's land,

¹⁶ Quoted in P.A. Kuz'minov, "Ot voennogo pokoreniia k poisku putei integratsii: zamysly i nachalo osushchestvleniia agrarnykh preobrazovanii u narodov severnogo kavkaza v 60-kh godakh XIX veka," in *Agrarnye otnosheniia u narodov Severnogo Kavakza XVIII-nachala XX veka, Tom. I*, idem. ed (Nalchik: El'-Fa, 2006), 429.

¹⁷ See for example, "Dokladnaia zapiska nachal'nika Kabardinskogo okruga ot 19 avgusta 1861 goda ob ostroi neobkhodimosti otkrytiia komiteta dlia razbora lichnykh i poszel'nykh prav zhitelei Kabardy v vidu ot'ezda v Turtsiiu 498 kabardinskiikh semei," in *Narody tsentral'nogo kavkaza. Tom II*, 151.

¹⁸ This was especially the case in Kuban Oblast in the northwest Caucasus, where as much as 90 percent of the indigenous population had emigrated to the Ottoman Empire. See Kuz'minov, "Ot voennogo pokoreniia," 434-36.

delimiting borders, and establishing ownership rights, a land fund could be set up for future Russian settlement.¹⁹ Finally, given that expansion into Caucasia had been a financial drain on the Russian state, the Ministry of Finance lobbied for expeditious land reform because it would at long last enable the collection of land taxes from the people of the Caucasus.²⁰ Indeed, as Breyfogle reminds us, “the bureaucrat-policeman state was also deeply concerned to ensure the proper and regular payment of taxes and obligation to the treasury.”²¹

In an 1861 memorandum to Minister of War Dmitrii Miliutin, Grigorii (Grigol) Dzhabakurian-Orbeliani, newly appointed viceroy, outlined many of the reasons for the perceived urgency of conducting land reforms in the North Caucasus. Orbeliani argued that “a satisfactory resolution of [the land] question...will serve of the surest guarantee of the material wellbeing of the people and the likelihood of their imminent moral development.” According to Orbeliani, the state’s wartime policies of repeatedly resettling mountaineer communities to temporary lands “sowed among the population a distrust of the government, forced everyone to be in constant fear for their future, and clearly led to a situation whereby no one wants to develop their land and expend significant labor and capital on it.” Orbeliani viewed the establishment of borders and ownership rights as “the necessary condition for the emergence among the people of a desire to expend capital and labor on land, and accordingly, for their complete

¹⁹This was the case in Lesser Kabarda, where the state set aside a significant amount of land specifically for Russian agricultural colonization. See, “*Vypiska s raporta nachal’nika Terksoi oblasti, pomoshchniku gladnokomanduiushchego Kavkazskoiu armiei, ot 6 dekabria 1865 goda za no. 3277-m,*” in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 113-14.

²⁰ Kумыков, *Ekonomicheskoe i kul’turnoe razvitie*, 59, 207.

²¹ Breyfogle, 61-62.

sedentarization, for their attachment to land through material interest...and finally, for the emergence among them of a demand for a significant improvement of their way of life and moral development.”²²

The empire-wide Peasant Reforms (i.e. the emancipation of Russia’s serfs and the resolution of attendant questions of land and estate rights emanating from it), the lead component of Alexander II’s modernization efforts collectively known as the Great Reforms, only strengthened the impulse to conduct land reforms in the feudal societies of the North Caucasus. To avoid the socially and politically volatile consequences of creating a landless rural proletariat after the abolition of serfdom in the North Caucasus, the administration needed to find a way to emancipate the region’s serfs with land.²³ Issues of land and serfs were most acute in the plains regions of the North Caucasus, such as Kabarda in the central Caucasus and the Kumyk lands of northern Dagestan, because these region’s had the arable land needed to implement the envisaged reforms and because, not coincidentally, it was also in these regions that feudalism and serfdom were most highly developed.²⁴

While the administration had pursued land reforms in individual Caucasian societies before, between 1859 and 1861 Viceroy Bariatinskii headed the first region-wide effort at reforming land and estate relations in the North Caucasus.²⁵ Bariatinskii

²²“Otnoshenie ispolniaiushchego obiazannosti glavnokomanduiushchego Kavkazskoi armiei general-ad”iutanta kniazia G.D. Orbeliani upravliaushchemu voennym ministerstvom general-ad”iutantu D.A. Miliutinu, ot 6 iulia 1861 goda, za no. 17,” in “Izbrannye dokumenty Kavkazskogo komiteta,” in *Sbornik russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva* 150, no. 2 (2000): 176-77.

²³ Orbeliani discussed the need to avoid creating a rural proletariat in his memo to Miliutin. See *ibid*.

²⁴ “Otchet o deiatel’nosti Komissii po razboru lichnykh i pozemel’nykh prav,” 171-74.

²⁵ For a detailed discussion of the various committees and their accomplishments see P.A. Kuz’minov, “Materialy soslovno-pozemel’nykh komissii kak istoricheskii istochnik po istorii narodov Severnogo

formed Committees for the Investigation of Personal and Land Rights of the Mountaineers in each district (*okrug*) of Terek Oblast. The Kabarda Committee began its work in November 1861. Though conducting an extensive amount of research on land and social relations, these committees never achieved the administration's goal of drafting comprehensive land reform legislation. Part of the difficulty that these land commissions faced was due to a lack of unified leadership and common principles.

Another major impediment to the success of these commissions was the difficulty of determining landownership rights, as stipulated by the Caucasus administration, according to "historical documents and customary law." The use of customary law was of part of a long-established established practice—born out of fears of provoking unrest at the imposition of foreign Russian laws on the one hand and of strengthening of Islamic influence on the other—of promoting *adat* (*khabza* in the Kabardian case) at the expense of *sharia*. In codifying customary law, as Jersild reminds writes, "colonial administrators attempted to create a recognizable order in the colonies."²⁶ But the diversity and fluidity of customs and practices of the manifold societies of the North Caucasus pointed to a level of administrative complexity at odds with the tsarist state's quest for a streamlined and standardized administrative order. Moreover, the absence of written law codes among these societies, and only scattered collections of recorded customs, further complicated the administration's efforts. Moreover, to the limited extent that texts on traditional land ownership and usage practices existed, the situation on the ground after

Kavkaza," in *De die in diem; pamiati A.P. Pronshteina (1919-1998)*, ed. V.V. Chernous (Rostov-na-Donu: Rostovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2004), 122-44.

²⁶ Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*, 89.

tsarist conquest bore little resemblance to these customs. As they began to receive claims to land allotments, each committee became bogged down in the adjudication of a dizzying number of small disputes. This administrative gridlock meant that the tsarist state in the North Caucasus, largely as a result of its wartime security policies, could not perform its usual functions of referee—a state that uses its role as mediator of disputes to integrate communities into the legal-administrative structure of the empire—or landscaper—a “gardening state” that seeks to transform its societies.²⁷ Indeed, the Kabardian Committee complained that “the [land] rights of lords, as a result of constant resettlement of auls have become so conflicted that it is impossible to allotment them with land according to ancient customs.”²⁸ The Caucasus administration dissolved the first Kabardian Land Committee in late 1862 and formed new Land Committees for the districts of Terek Oblast.

Meanwhile, as these committees were in the middle of their deliberations, a new leadership came to power in the Caucasus and established a set of common principles on which the land reforms would be based.²⁹ Importantly, the principles for the land reforms, formulated first by viceroy Orbeliani in a July 6 1861 memorandum to Minister of War Dmitrii Miliutin, abjured customary law as the legal bases for future legislation.³⁰ During the Caucasian Wars, the administration had to tread lightly around the land question and tried to work within the framework of the Kabardian feudal customs of landownership when resolving land disputes, lest it risk provoking the pacified societies to a new

²⁷ Breyfogle, 68-75.

²⁸ Quoted in Kuz'minov, “Agrarnaia i sotsial'naia politika,” 504.

²⁹ Ibid., 501-06.

³⁰ Arapov et al., 216.

rebellion. Though, to be sure, the bureaucrat-policeman state in the Caucasus sometimes disregarded customary law when it deemed it to be in the interests of regional security (witness the numerous deportations and resettlements of mountaineer communities). Indeed, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Russian state had not completely abandoned its long-standing *modus operandi* for colonization which was based on the “assum[ption] that most land in newly-conquered frontier regions was state property, and [therefore it could] dispose...of the land as it saw fit.”³¹ For nineteenth-century the North Caucasus, however, this logic only applied to lands where the state faced active resistance. In other cases, such as that of the Anzorovs in post-conquest Kabarda, the tsarist officials recognized ownership rights and offered compensation for resettlements. After the war, the Caucasus administration decided that a more heavy-handed, top-down solution to the land question, based on its own considerations could be achieved without great security risk.³²

The main tenets of this new, post-war approach to land reforms are reflected in Orbeliani’s 1861 project draft. According to Orberliani’s project, the government should not spend valuable resources and time on determining the historic land ownership rights of each family, a process fraught with complexities as the Anzorov case and similar ones from the 1840s and 1850s made abundantly clear. Instead, the tsarist government would consider all land on the plains—the most valuable and sought after land in the region—

³¹ David Moon, “Peasant Migration and the Settlement of Russia’s Frontiers, 1550-1897,” *The Historical Journal* 40, no. 4 (1997): 882.

³² M. G. Gonikishvili, “Podgotovka i provedenie krest’ianskoi reformy v kabardinskom okruge.” In *Gruzino-Severo-Kavkazskie Vzaïmootnosheniia*, ed. G. Togoshvili (Tbilisi: Akademiia Nauk Gruzinskoi SSR, 1981), 136.

state (*kazennaia*) land and redistribute it at its own discretion.³³ The plains of the North Caucasus, the only area suitable for large-scale agriculture, was of great importance for the economic development of the region and the Empire as a whole. The tsarist authorities believed that, among other factors, the numerous territorial disputes and competing claims to landownership among local feudal lords and the general reluctance of most of these lords to modernize their agricultural practices inhibited the full economic exploitation of this land. The old feudal system of land relations—a system that had been destabilized and become increasingly untenable thanks to the military administration's war-time land policies—would be replaced by a new one that combined private (*chastnaia*) and communal (*obshchinnnaia*) land. Orbeliani suggested that the state recognize a set number of allotments as the private property (*chastnaia sobstvennost'*) of princes and nobles (and non-nobles who had rendered significant service to the state) under the condition that they give up their claims to all other lands formerly belonging to them and their vassals. However, in this case, private landownership would be a privilege of the nobility, rather than a right. The state's expropriation and redistribution of Kabarda's land would obviate the difficulties of adjudicating competing claims to land. The remaining majority of the land in Kabarda would be given to the communal use of the Kabardian peasantry after their liberation.³⁴

The government favored the transformation of Kabarda's land into communal property controlled by the state as a resolution to the land question in Kabarda for at least

³³ Kумыков, *Ekonomicheskoe i kul'turnoe razvitie*, 205.

³⁴ "Otnoshenie ispolniaiushchego obiazannosti glavnokomanduiushchego Kavkazskoi armiei general-ad"iutanta kniazia G.D. Orbeliani upravliaushchemu voennym ministerstvu general-ad"iutantu D.A. Miliutinu," 176-78.

five reasons. First, it would drastically simplify the administrative work involved in conducting land reforms and, in particular, facilitate the future provisioning of Kabarda's emancipated serfs with land. Second, by reapportioning land, the state could set aside land for future Russian colonization. Third, by giving the Kabardian peasantry communal land, the state could defuse social tensions between the Kabardian peasantry and feudal lords. Fourth, by also taking away the nobility's land (i.e. the means of production)—albeit temporarily until a new redistribution—the state could remove the last vestiges of their former social influence, make them entirely dependent upon the state, and take away the lynchpin of feudalism on eve of its final destruction. Fifth, by limiting private landownership in Kabarda, the state could treat most of the remaining Kabardian territory as a tabula rasa and resettle communities within Kabarda at will so that the demographic map of Kabarda fit the state's conceptions of regional security: the consolidation of native auls into larger villages on the plains surrounded by Cossack *stanitsy*.³⁵

The impulse to expand the state domain through land reforms in the north Caucasus was also common in other parts of the empire. According to Pravilova, “the tendency to enlarge state property whenever possible prevailed in the policies of the Ministry of State Domains and local authorities in Transcaucasia and Turkestan in the 1880s and 1890s.”³⁶ The Ministry of State Domains, which Nicholas I created in the 1830s as a means to better regulate and management the state resources and their use,³⁷ was interested in having lands—in north Caucasia, Transcaucasia, Turkestan and

³⁵ M. Kh. Atskanov, *Ekonomicheskie otnosheniia i ekonomicheskie vzgliady v Kabarde i Balkarii (1860-1917 gg.)* (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1967), 72.

³⁶ Pravilova, 381.

³⁷ Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 139.

elsewhere—recognized as state lands because it could then use these lands as part of a land fund for a future state-regulated and controlled process of Russian peasant colonization. Local officials, “look[ing] down upon a society that they considered inferior,” “believed that conquest endowed them with the right of ownership.”³⁸ While Pravilova does not fully contextualize the motivations of local officials, in the case of Kabarda, local officials were opposed to private landownership because it impeded their ability to dispense with lands and practice population politics according to considerations of state security. In Transcaucasia and Turkestan local officials interpreted Ottoman/Islamic property law to suit their goals (a common practice among modern European empires) so that the legal status of the vast majority of newly annexed lands corresponded with the Russian conception of state (*kazennaia*) lands.³⁹ Similarly, as we will see, the Caucasus administration, ignoring the fact that Kabardian land customs did not correspond to any Russian legal categories, interpreted Kabardian customary property law so that all lands would be considered communal land. This concept of communal (*obshchinnaia*) land was more constraining for the administration than the concept of state land in Transcaucasia and Central Asia because it meant that the land belonged to the entire Kabardian people rather than the state. In other words, once recognized as Kabardian communal land, this land could *not* be used for the settlement of other communities, namely Russian peasants. But communal land did mean that the state *could* redistribute land among Kabardian village societies, and resettle societies within this

³⁸ Pravilova., 373-74.

³⁹ Ibid., 371.

territory, at will, and that it could avoid the complexities of determining the landownership rights of Kabarda's noble and princely families.

In early 1863, Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich, Alexander II's brother, replaced Grigol Orbeliani as Viceroy of the Caucasus. Remaining true to his predecessor's project, Mikhail Nikolaevich tasked the new Head of Terek Oblast, Mikhail Loris-Melikov, with implementing the land reforms in the central Caucasus according to Orbeliani's principles. A Russian-educated scion of one of Transcaucasia's most powerful Armenian princely families, Loris-Melikov made a name for himself through military service in the Caucasian Wars.⁴⁰ Noted for his comparatively liberal views, Loris-Melikov would go on to become one of Alexander II's closest advisors and Russia's Minister of Internal Affairs. Indeed, on the eve of Alexander II's assassination, Loris-Melikov drafted what could have been Russia's first constitution.⁴¹ In May 1863, Loris-Melikov, replaced the multiple district-level commissions with a single Commission for the Determination of Personal and Land Rights for the Residents of Terek Oblast. In the primary and secondary literature this commission is referred to as the Terek Estate-Land Commission. This Commission would operate on the basis of most of the principles expounded by Orbeliani two years earlier.

Loris-Melikov appointed a Kabardian, Collegiate Councilor of the Viceroy Dmitrii Kodzokov, as Chairman of the Commission. In choosing the Commission's

⁴⁰ For discussions of Loris-Melikov's work in the Caucasus see Z.Kh. Ibragimova, "M.T. Loris-Melikov," in *Sbornik Statei: Severnyi Kavkaz—vremia peremen (1860-1880)*, ed. Z.Kh. Ibragimova (Moscow: Eslan, 2001), 55-79; and P.A. Kuz'minov, "M.T. Loris-Melikov na Kavkaze," *Kavkazskii sbornik* 34 no. 2 (2005): 124-25.

⁴¹ Hans Heilbrunner "Alexander III and the Reform Plan of Loris-Melikov," *The Journal of Modern History* 33, no. 4 (1961): 384-97.

leader, Loris-Melikov sought out a highly educated administrator with expert knowledge of the societies of the North Caucasus. Additionally, according to Loris-Melikov, the Commission must be “composed of members, practically and theoretically educated, not only in military arts and military administration, but also, if not more, than at least as much, in law, history, geography, statistics...political economy and agriculture.”⁴² This person also needed to support the principles for land reform adopted by the government. In other words, he could not have any entrenched corporate interests with the native nobility that would interfere with a program of expropriating and redistributing the plains land of the nobility. Kodzokov, an exceptional figure for his time, met all of these criteria.

Kodzokov’s mixed Kabardian and Russian upbringing and his Slavophile intellectual milieu had a formative impact on the way he approach land reform in the North Caucasus. Born in 1818 in the mixed Kabardian-Abaza aul of Abukovo along the river Podkumok in what is now Karachai-Cherkessia,⁴³ Dmitrii was known as Lukman before his conversion from Islam to Orthodoxy in 1830. Lukman was the son of Magomet Kodzokov, a member of the lower Kabardian nobility who briefly severed in the Russian Army as a member of the tsar’s Caucasus-Mountaineer Squadron in Saint Petersburg. In 1824, hoping to provide a better future for his son, Magomet gave up six-year-old Lukman to be raised by Maria Khomiakova, a Russian noblewoman and mother of the co-founder of the Slavophile movement, Aleksei Khomiakov. At the time,

⁴² Quoted in S.A. Ailarova, “D.S. Kodzokov v 30-70 gg. XIX veka: prosvetitel’, reformator, khoziaistvennik,” *Izvestiia SOIGSI* 40, no. 1 (2007): 96.

⁴³ In 1903, most of Abukovo’s residents resettled to central Kabarda, a delayed result of Kodzokov’s own work. The Karachai village of Pervomaiskoe now stands in Abukovo’s place. See Gaibov, 44-48.

Khomiakova was taking in the waters at the burgeoning spa town of Piatigorsk, just outside the new frontiers of Kabarda.⁴⁴ With the pacification of Kabarda and the end of major military operations in the central Caucasus, the spa towns of Piatigor'e began to attract a growing number of vacationers from among the Empire's elites. It is unclear whether Maria Khomiakova met Magomet Kodzokov in Piatigorsk, which was becoming a center of trade for the surrounding mountaineer population, or in Abukovo during an organized excursion to surrounding "pacified" auls, a common occurrence at the time.⁴⁵ Kodzokov spent the next six years of his life on the Khomiakov estate outside Moscow where he was raised by an English governess, a common practice among Russian noble families. When Aleksei Khomiakov returned from the Balkan front of the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-29, he took an interest in the intellectual and spiritual (Khomiakov adhered to a messianic form of Eastern Orthodoxy) development of the young Kabardian boy. In 1830, Lukman was baptized Dmitrii Stepanovich. Aleksei, Dmitrii's senior by fourteen years, was his godfather.⁴⁶

Kodzokov's intellectual development would play a key role in his return to the Caucasus as an adult and his later championing of communal landownership in Kabarda. Kodzokov's schooling took place in the most elite institutions of the Russian Empire. In 1830, the Khomiakovs concluded Dmitrii's homeschooling and sent him to the boarding school of Professor Mikhail Pavlov where he studied Latin, Greek, French, German,

⁴⁴ T.Kh. Kumykov, *Dmitrii Kodzovok* (Nalchik: Izd-vo Elbrus, 1985) 16-17.

⁴⁵ Tuganov, *Istoriia obshchestvennoi mysli*, 122-23; This practice of taking excursions to native villages, what would today be called "ethno-tourism," would become even more widespread in the Crimea eighty years later when the region overtook the Caucasus as the country's most popular and prestigious resort area. See William George Lywood, "Our Riviera, Coast of Health: Environment, Medicine, and Resort Life in Fin-de-Siècle Crimea" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2012).

⁴⁶ Kumykov, *Dmitrii Kodzokov*, 18-22.

English, religion, physics, rhetoric and logic, geography, statistics, Russian and general history, mathematics, arts, and music. In 1834, Kodzokov entered Moscow University where he studied in the Philosophy Department. As a student, Kodzokov read avidly and developed as a writer himself. Under the influence of the popular romantic Russian literature of the era in which the Caucasus figured prominently as Russia's own orient, Kodzokov exhibited an increasing interest in his native Caucasus.⁴⁷ Indeed, his writings demonstrate that, despite his Russian upbringing, he identified, however abstractly, with the Caucasus.⁴⁸ In 1837, Moscow University published a collection of his poetry entitled, *Poems of a Young Circassian*. His entries for university essay competitions, "A Description of the Caucasus" and "Siege of the Troitskii Monastery," reflect his cultural duality. These writings won gold medals at Moscow University's annual essay contest. Other medalists included his classmates Iurii Samarin (one of the architects of Alexander II's Emancipation Statues) and Mikhail Katkov (the conservative Russian nationalist journalist).⁴⁹ Moscow University was one of the centers of intellectual life in the Empire during the birth of the Westernizer-Slavophile debate in the late 1830s. Indeed, Alexander Herzen, the champion of a western model of Russian development, formed his circle (*kruzhok*) at Moscow University.

Throughout his long career in the Caucasus administration, Kodzokov's approach to reforming the native societies of the North Caucasus reveals the influence of slavophile views on the peasant and land questions. The views were the result of

⁴⁷ See, for example, Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*.

⁴⁸ Kумыков, *Dmitrii Kodzokov*, 23-28.

⁴⁹ Tuganov, *Istoriia obshchestvennoi mysli*, 125.

Kodzokov's imbibing in the intellectual ferment of Moscow in the 1830s. Given the influence of his godfather and close friend, Aleksei Khomiakov, Kodzokov gravitated toward a slavophile milieu that included the Aksakov and Kireevskii brothers and Dmitrii Valuev, the latter being a contemporaneous graduate of Pavlov's boarding school and Moscow University. The "peasant question" was a frequent topic of conversation among Khomiakov's circle of Slavophile philosopher-friends.⁵⁰ Both Slavophiles and Westernizers were opposed to feudalism as it then existed in Russia. Unlike the westernizers who envisaged a future for Russian society and agriculture based on private property and commercial farming, Khomiakov and his followers idealized the Russian peasant commune (*mir*) and believed that communal land-use and self-governance were essential components of Russia's unique path.⁵¹

In 1839, after graduating from Moscow University, Kodzokov returned to the Caucasus to reconnect with his Kabardian family and, he hoped, apply his knowledge and skills in the service of the Russian administration to benefit his native land and the Empire. On one of his frequent early letters from Piatigorsk to his adoptive mother in Moscow, Kodzokov declared, "nothing could be more pleasant than to ensure the wellbeing of the people...and, in so doing, perhaps forge a career for myself, not a brilliant one, but an original and noble one...It is more gratifying to receive the thanks of several thousand poor peasants, than the rank of a...State Councilor."⁵² Kodzokov settled

⁵⁰ Kумыков, *Dmitrii Kodzokov*, 19.

⁵¹ On Khomiakov's views in particular, see Peter Christoff, *A.S. Khomiakov* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); On Slavophiles more generally, see Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles; a Study of Romantic Ideology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952).

⁵² Quoted in Ailarova, 86.

in Piatigorsk in the home of the exiled Decembrist-*cum*-Caucasianist Vasili Sukhorukov.⁵³ For the first three years after his return to the Caucasus, Kodzokov's attempts to find employment in the local administration near Kabarda met with disappointment. According to Tugan Kumykov, author of Kodzokov's biography, the Caucasus leadership was unwilling to extend a position in the local tsarist administration to Kodzokov because of his Kabardian ethnicity.⁵⁴ No matter how loyal and russified Kodzokov was (he had forgotten most of his native Circassian language), his loyalties would always be suspect in the eyes of tsarist officials. Indeed, in 1841, Kodzokov seemed poised to secure the position of Superintendent to the Karachai People after the previous superintendent, Semen Atarshchikov, committed treason and fled to the unpacified Circassians of the Kuban region.⁵⁵ Kodzokov spent this time of "retirement" (*otstavka*) (re)learning Circassian, studying the customs and socio-economic conditions of the peoples of the North Caucasus, meeting with Russian and native intellectuals and writers (Mikhail Lermontov and Kabardian intellectual Shora Nogma⁵⁶ among others), and attempting to introduce Russian schools and new, European and Russian farming practicing into Kabardian society.⁵⁷ Kodzokov also returned to Moscow for an extended

⁵³ Tuganov, *Istoriia obshchestvennoi mysli*, 128-129.

⁵⁴ Kumykov, *Dmitrii Kodzokov*, 56.

⁵⁵ Beituganov, *Istoriia i familii*, 253.

⁵⁶ For discussions of Nogma (Nogmov), the first Kabardian/Circassian historian, see Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices*, 86-87; Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*, 83, 93; Brian Boeck, "Probing Parity between History and Oral Tradition: Putting Shora Nogmov's History of the Adygei People in its Place," *Central Asian Survey* 17, no. 2 (1998): 319-36.

⁵⁷ Kumykov, *Dmitrii Kodzokov*, 40-56.

period to spend time with his aging adoptive mother with whom he had maintained regular contact.⁵⁸

In the roughly two decades between his return to the Caucasus and appointment to Chairman of the Terek Estate-Land Commission, Kodzokov developed negative views of the Kabardian feudal lords because their conservatism had repeatedly disappointed Kodzokov and thwarted his modernizing projects. Kodzokov's enmity toward the Kabardian nobility made him a perfect candidate to lead the administration's land reform efforts because they would entail ending the nobility's monopoly on land and introducing of communal of land use. While satisfied by his progress in his ethnographic and linguistic studies, the results of his reform efforts disappointed Kodzokov. In an 1839 letter home to the Khomiakovs, Kodzokov confessed, "I would not lose sight of the transformations in Kabarda's way of life I had so fervently taken up...But it is impossible to do everything anytime soon."⁵⁹ Initial attempts to open a school that would teach peasant boys basic math and Russian in his home village and a project for administrative reform in Kabarda based on customary law all came up against the conservatism of the Kabardian nobility and opposition or indifference from the tsarist administration.⁶⁰ Kodzokov's frustration with the Kabardian nobility would only grow stronger when, in later years, his attempts to introduce western agricultural and stockbreeding practices to Kabarda failed due to the disinterest of the Kabardian nobility. His attempts to promote the construction of irrigation canals, improvements in crop rotation, and factory horse

⁵⁸ Tuganov, *Istoriia obshchestvennoi mysli*, 338-39.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Ailarova, 89.

⁶⁰ Ailarova, 189-91.

breeding were consistently dashed by the rigidity of Kabarda's feudal lords.⁶¹ While Kodzokov used his limited resources to set up model farms in Kabarda, these efforts suffered from a lack of free labor (due to serfdom) and the reluctance of other nobles to assist Kodzokov or learn from and adopt his practices.⁶² Kodzokov experienced culture shock and frustration with Kabardian economic practices. Kodzokov wrote to Maria Khomiakova that "the local inhabitants have no understanding of their carelessness: their herds are dying; they lose horses....and there is nothing to say about their farming, it is just pitiful."⁶³ Kodzokov quickly developed an antipathy toward the Kabardian feudal elite that would last the remainder of his life. Indeed, this struggle against the conservative nobility to reform Kabardian society came to define Kodzokov's life from the 1860s on.

In 1845, by relocating to Tiflis, the center of the Caucasus administration, Kodzokov's efforts at securing a position finally met with success. This appointment marked the beginning of a long and successful career in the Caucasus administration. Kodzokov's success in 1845 may be no coincidence. It was in this year that Mikhail Vorontsov became Viceroy (*namestnik*) of the Caucasus. In addition to his role as an enlightened modernizer bringing European culture to the Caucasus, Vorontsov is noted for his attempts to foster imperial loyalty by integrating social elites from Caucasia's diverse communities into the region's administrative apparatus. Vorontsov brought new opportunities for native Caucasians like Kodzokov to serve in and ascend the ranks of the

⁶¹ Kумыков, *Ekonomicheskoe i kul'turnoe razvitiie*, 273.

⁶² Ailarova., 193.

⁶³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 192.

tsarist administration. Indeed, contemporaries scorned Vorontsov for replacing Russian officials with native Caucasians.⁶⁴ Starting out in the Customs Department as the Assistant to the Head of the Nakhichevan Customs Post, Kodzokov was quickly promoted to Head Clerk of the Transcaucasian Customs District. During this period, Kodzokov swiftly ascended the Table of Ranks.⁶⁵

Kodzokov was essentially an outsider to the privileged Kabardian upper nobility and his *lower* noble status complicated the question of his entry position in the table of ranks. This contributed to the lack of corporate solidarity that made him an excellent candidate to lead the administration's land reforms in Kabarda. If Kabardian princes (*pshi*) and first-level nobles (*tlekotliash*) had little difficulty being recognized as nobility upon entering Russian service, members of the lower, second-level, nobility (*beslan-uork*), like Kodzokov, often encountered difficulties in trying to prove their noble status. Kodzokov had to jump through a series of bureaucratic hoops in order to secure his place as a *Russian* nobleman. The unusual fact that Kodzokov was a civil servant rather than a military officer only added additional complications to the determination of Kodzokov's status.⁶⁶ Difficulties surrounding Kodzokov's noble status may also explain his hostility toward the Kabardian upper nobility who, in his view, took their privileges for granted and were "lazy and inept."⁶⁷ Moreover, unlike the princes and high-nobles, as lower nobility, Kodzokov's family was not composed of large land owners.

⁶⁴ On Vorontsov see, L.H. Rhineland, "Viceroy Vorontsov's Administration of the Caucasus," in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change*, 87-104.

⁶⁵ Kумыков, *Dmitrii Kodzokov*, 56-59.

⁶⁶ Kудашев, 118.

⁶⁷ Kумыков, *Ekonomicheskoe i kul'turnoe razvitiie*, 214.

With his ascension to the rank of Collegiate Secretary in 1847, the administration promoted Kodzokov to Head of the Chancellery of the Transcaucasian Quarantine and Customs District. From this position, Kodzokov attracted the favorable attention of Viceroy Vorontsov.⁶⁸ In 1848, a political crisis struck Kabarda as a result of the heavy-handed actions of the local administration. These administrative abuses occurred in the wake of an incursion by Imam Shamil's anti-tsarist resistance forces in 1846, general tensions surrounding Cossack colonization, and the Kabardians' struggle to regain control of their Cossack-administered mountain pastures.⁶⁹ Vorontsov sent Kodzokov on special assignment to Kabarda to investigate numerous complaints by local residents and officials against the excesses and abuses of Colonel Nikolai Beklemishev, Head of the Center of the Caucasus Line. Beklemishev outraged Kabardian society by taking a young Kabardian woman as his mistress, impregnating her, and then attempting to marry her off to a local man for money. Kodzokov's report was responsible for the replacement of the reviled Beklemishev with Georgii Eristov. A Georgian prince known for his more conciliatory attitude toward the native population,⁷⁰ Eristov's appointment reflects both the generally frequent use of Georgians throughout the Caucasus administration and Vorontsov's practice of replacing ineffective Russian administrators with elites from Georgia and other parts of Caucasia. After serving in several other posts in various parts of the Caucasus, in 1861 Orbeliani promoted Kodzokov to Senior Official for Special Assignments of the Viceroy of the Caucasus. Kodzokov would hold this position until his

⁶⁸ Kумыков, *Dmitrii Kodzokov*, 58-59.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

⁷⁰ Tuganov, *Istoriia obshchestvennoi mysli*, 134-43.

death in 1893, serving simultaneously as Chair of the Terek Estate-Land and Terek-Kuban Estate Commissions from 1863 to 1888.⁷¹

Kodzokov's first task as Chair of the Terek Estate-Land Commission was to find a way to legally justify the transfer all of Kabarda's land to the state for redistribution as what he hoped would be communal land. In the summer of 1863, Kodzokov achieved this task with the Kabardian nobility's signing of the Declaration of August 20, 1863. In this document "representatives of the Kabardian princes, nobles (*uzdens*), freemen, and serfs (*chernyi narod*)" declared that "the land of the Kabardian people is our common property, and we wish to use it on the basis of communal ownership and according to those mutual relations under which we, Kabardians, have always lived."⁷² In calling for communal landownership and denying the documented existence of feudal landownership in Kabarda, the Kabardian nobility signed away their monopoly over Kabarda's land. In giving up their land rights, they, in effect, lost the basis of their feudal privileges as serf owners.

Why would the Kabardian feudal elite sign a declaration that was so clearly against their interests? One answer can be found at the end of the Declaration. After stating their desire for a communal system of landownership, the Kabardian representatives continued by requesting:

that the lands along the Zolka and Etoko, given back to us in 1845 for our use and necessary for our economy, be gifted to us; and also that the borders of the Kabardian lands with the mountaineers [Balkars], Ossetians, Karachai, and

⁷¹ Kумыков, *Dmitrii Kodzokov*, 60-64.

⁷² "Akt 20-go Avgusta, 1863 goda," in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 88-90.

Cossack Cordon lands be made known...and that we be given a map of these borders officially approved by His Imperial Majesty.⁷³

Kabardians never resigned themselves to the loss of their summer pasture lands along the Zolka and Etoko Rivers. Without these pastures, which were rich in Alpine grasses in the summer months, Kabardians would be unable to maintain their large stockbreeding economy. Kabardians of all social estates continued to fear that the state would retake these lands, to which they had only temporary usage rights (*vremennoe pol'zovanie*), and use them for Russian settlement. Kodzokov, also recognizing the importance of these lands and, hoping to preserve them permanently for the Kabardian people, convinced Kabarda's nobles that by declaring Kabarda's land communal, they would be rewarded by the return of these pastures to Kabardian ownership. Moreover, given Kabarda's land losses to Cossacks and neighboring Caucasian peoples during the tsarist conquest of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Kabardians hoped to preserve the remainder of their land from future annexations by signing this declaration and obtaining an official map of Kabarda's borders. Indeed, Kabardian elites had learned from their European-Russian colonizers the power of the map as "a key element in the ability to claim a territory."⁷⁴ Finally, it must be added that Kodzokov, as a Kabardian, also wanted to prevent the further contraction of Kabarda's territory.⁷⁵

The limited source base does not allow a definitive answer as to why the Kabardian nobility sign the Declaration of August 20 1864. In recounting his conversations with an aged Kodzokov in the early 1880s, the Balkar intellectual Misost

⁷³ Ibid., 89.

⁷⁴ Geoff King, *Mapping Reality: An Exploration of Cultural Cartographies* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), 139.

⁷⁵ Ailarova, 98.

Abaev indicates that Kodzokov convinced Kabarda's feudal elite, who were wary of further interference in their internal affairs, that this declaration would prevent future Russian attempts to transform Kabardian society. Kodzokov's key role in removing the corrupt local official, Beklemishev, in 1848, earned him the trust and respect, at least temporarily, of all classes in Kabardian society.⁷⁶ In his memoirs the disgraced Beklemishev recalls how "Kabardians awaited Kodzokov's arrival with great impatience. They set up sentries on the tops of the hills far from the auls to report on his arrival. They came out on horseback to meet Kodzokov who, with the arrogance of an Asiatic upstart, solemnly entered Kabarda with a large retinue... Long lines formed outside Kodzokov's residence in Nalchik where people crowded in [to voice their grievances] around the clock."⁷⁷ Kodzokov's biographer Tugan Kумыkov argues that the Kabardian elites naively believed that this Declaration would give them immunity from the impending emancipation of serfs in the North Caucasus and allow them to preserve their feudal privileges.⁷⁸ While the Kabardian feudal class' belief that they could retain their privileges while giving up their ownership of land may seem utterly naive, it may have also been the case the Kabardian feudal elite, predominately illiterate and inexperienced in the juridical norms of Russia and textual law in general, did not fully understand the implications of what they were signing. It is plausible that they believed that the Russian administration would not interfere with Kabarda's social structure and that the power of Kabardian custom would uphold relations of feudal dependence in their society. Based on

⁷⁶T.Kh. Kумыkov, *Zhizn' i obshchestvennaia deiatel'nost L.M. Kodzokva* (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1962), 16-18.

⁷⁷"Zapiski o Kavkaze, pisannye N. Beklemishevym v Orenburge v 1849 g.," *Shchukinskii sbornik*, no. 2 (1903): 33.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

Abaev's conversations with Kodzokov, it is clear, however, that Kodzokov deceived the Kabardian princes and nobles into signing this Declaration. According to Abaev, "Kodzokov worked hard on the business of getting the upper estates of Kabarda to submit this declaration and he achieved his goal by using several influential Kabardian princes and nobles who, as a result, repented their not altogether selfless act."⁷⁹ Reflecting on his actions, an aged Kodzokov admitted to Abaev that he "used every clean and unclear measure to force the Kabardian princes and nobles to voluntarily give up their property rights to their ancestral lands" because he "thought that all of the lands would transfer to the property of the Kabardian people."⁸⁰

After achieving the communalization of Kabarda's land in August 1863, Kodzokov's Commission spent the next four years working out the remaining aspects of comprehensive land reform in Kabarda.⁸¹ In late 1863 and early 1864, the Commission delimited borders between Kabarda and Balkaria (a controversial and conflict-ridden process treated in detail below). The Commission spent 1864 collecting data and examining the territory of Kabarda. In 1865, the Commission implemented some of its most far-reaching reforms including: the establishment of rules for communal landownership of farm lands, hay meadows, pastures, and forests; the introduction of state taxes on households of village societies; a draft on the allotment of land to Nalchik fortress (the center of tsarist power in Kabarda), its suburbs, and the recently-formed Mountain Jew colony; and the resettlement and enlargement of Kabarda's auls. This last

⁷⁹ Misost Abaev, "Balkariia" *Musul'manin*, 14-17 (1911): 621.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 622.

⁸¹ Kudashev, 203.

action was the most consequential. In February, the Land Commission met with the head of the Kabardian District, local officials, and Kabardian delegates over the course of 6 days to discuss the question “of the improved settlement and formation of inhabited auls in Greater Kabarda” and resolved “to form 33 auls from the existing 97.”⁸² Resettled auls continued to exist as quarters retaining their former name within an enlarged aul.⁸³ The enlargement program had three purposes: 1) it facilitated the administration’s policing tasks; 2) it simplified the task of allotting communal land to auls; and 3) it helped free up land for future settlement. This last point was especially true for Lesser (eastern) Kabarda, where the administration formed nine Kabardian auls out of the existing 19.⁸⁴ In 1866, the Kodzokov’s draft on the allotment of communal land among the auls of Kabarda awaited official approval by the Viceroy. Thus, when Kodzokov received the unwelcome order “to determine how much land in...Kabarda could be set aside for a private-ownership land fund and in which places it would be most convenient to have this land,”⁸⁵ his land reform project for Kabarda was nearly complete.

Given his populism and his antipathy toward Kabarda’s feudal elite, Kodzokov considered communal landownership to be “fully in accordance with the people’s [*narodnyi*] character and customs and, without the slightest doubt, with the general happiness of the entire Kabardian people.”⁸⁶ The Caucasian administration in Tiflis, and Viceroy Mikhail Nikolaevich in particular, developed a very different opinion on land

⁸² Quoted in Karov ed, *Administrativno-territorial'nye preobrazovaniia*, 23-24.

⁸³ Mesiat, 16.

⁸⁴ Beslaneev, 133-134

⁸⁵ “O raspredelenii zemel' bol'shoi Kabardy,” 144.

⁸⁶ Statskii sovetnik Kodzokov and maior Maslovskii, “Otchet o deiatel'nosti Komissii po razboru lichnykh i pozemel'nykh prav tuzemtsev Terskoi obl. s 1-IX, 1863 g. po 1 Ianv. 1869 g.,” in *Krest'ianskaia reforma v Severnoi Osetii*, ed. G.A. Kokiev (Ordzhonikidze: Gos. Izdatel'stvo Severo-Osetinskoi ASSR, 1940), 181.

reform in Kabarda. Most importantly, Mikhail Nikolaevich, wanted to establish a system that would include private (*chastnaia*) and communal (*obshchinnaia*) land tenure as outlined in Orbeliani's 1861 project, of which Mikhail Nikolaevich was a supporter and to which Kodzokov was not privy.

In his 1861 draft project for land reform in the North Caucasus, Viceroy Orbeliani weighed the pro and cons of private and communal landownership and argued for a reform that would combine the two. Orbeliani argued that "communal [landownership] precludes the possibility of a proletariat [but] private [landownership] leads to the more complete development of agriculture." While admitting that "the upper estates...really were owners of the land and, because of this, all who lived on their lands owed them personal and monetary dues," Orbeliani maintained that "it is impossible to keep these rights of the upper estates in force because such a measure would not accord with our understanding of their Russian subjecthood." Nevertheless, in claiming that "it would be unjust to take away all of the aristocratic estate's former rights," Orbeliani recognized the importance of maintaining the native nobility's support. Orbeliani deemed it "necessary to reward them with...land allotments...based on full landownership rights, under the condition that they not have any further pretensions to the lands, which they formerly considered their property and, likewise, to those persons, whom they considered their vassals."⁸⁷

Another consideration that would have influenced Mikhail Nikolaevich to support the distribution of private land to the Kabardian nobility was the latter's fierce hostility to

⁸⁷ "Otnoshenie ispolniaiushchego obiazannosti glavomoanduiushchego," 176-77.

the planned emancipation of their serfs. The emancipation of serfs in the North Caucasus, implied in Orbeliani's project and being planned by Kabardian District chief Aleksandr Nurid, as to be expected, aroused the anger of the Kabardian nobility, the largest serf-owning group in the North Caucasus. The Kabardian nobility was already upset by Kodzokov's resettlement of their auls during the village enlargement, which they abortively resisted. The news of the impending emancipation of Kabarda's serfs, something they hope to avoid by signing the Declaration of August 20, nearly provoked a bloody confrontations between the Kabardian elite and the local administration. About 3,000 Kabardians resettled to the Ottoman Empire in protest of the reforms between 1865 and 1866.⁸⁸ In December 1866, Kabarda's nobles issued an ultimatum to the government: "either leave us with our serfs or allow us to resettle to Turkey."⁸⁹ When the government rejected mass requests to resettle to the Ottoman Empire, the Kabardian elite began to openly resist. In February 1867, an armed detachment of 300 Kabardians, led by the most powerful Kabardian nobles in Russian military service, marched on Nalchik and restated their demands to Kabardian district chief Nurid. Meanwhile, representatives of the Kabardian nobility went around Kabarda's auls to prepare them for an uprising. Nurid stood firm, declaring to the nobles: "just as the River Baksan cannot be made to flow backwards up the mountains, the process of emancipation cannot be stopped."⁹⁰ Nurid's timely use of nearby Cossack armies and the clear lack of support among their own

⁸⁸ Zh. Kalmykov, "Cherkesskaia tragediia. Iz istorii nasil'stvennogo vyseleniia adygov v Osmanskyiu imperiiu," in *Cherkesskii vopros: Istoriia, problemy i puti resheniia*, ed. A. Kh. Mukozhev (Nalchik: Koordinatsionnyi sovet adygskikh obshchestvennykh organizatsii, 2012), 60.

⁸⁹ E.S. "Krepost'nye v Kabarde i ikh osvobozhdeniia," in *Sbornik Svedenii o Kavkazskikh Gortsakh*, 1 (1868): 33-34.

⁹⁰ Quoted in T. Kh. Kumykov, "Zemel'naia reforma v Kabarda v 1863-1869 gg.," *Uchenye zapiski Kabardino-Balkarskogo nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta*, 12: (1957), 275.

peasantry forced the Kabardian nobles to stand down. However, it was clear to administration that they would need to placate the Kabardian nobility in some way.⁹¹

Viceroy Mikhail Nikolaevich explained his reasons for favoring for the distribution of a significant portion of Kabarda's land to the local nobility in a draft project that he sent to Terek Oblast head Loris-Melikov in late December 1866. The Viceroy's motives in revising the Kodzokov Commission's land-reform project reveal two crucial aspects of the tsarist state's ideology of colonial rule. First and foremost, the Viceroy was concerned that an exclusively communal system of land rights would isolate Kabarda from Russian cultural and economic influences and inhibit the imperial integration of the region because it would preclude the possibility of *future* Russian peasant settlement (something many throughout the tsarist administration were striving to facilitate in the long term) on purchased or rented land here. According to the viceroy, "by isolating Kabarda from all outside influence, an exclusively communal system of landownership...would make the proper civil and economic development of the region, and its true spiritual convergence [*dukhovnoe sliianie*] with Russia, impossible."⁹²

Second, the administration generally believed that to maintain stability in this restive part of the empire, it would need to rely on the support of local elites from each of the cultural and linguistic communities of the North Caucasus. To be sure, the tsarist state privileged certain communities over others. The tsarist administration invariably favored the Cossacks. Other local communities, Kabardians and Ossetians for example, at times

⁹¹ For a contemporaneous description of the tensions in Kabarda on the eve of emancipation, see E.S. "Krepost'nye v Kabarde," 30-38.

⁹² "O raspredelenie zemel' bol'shoi kabardy," in *Territoiia i rasselenie*, 143.

enjoyed more social and economic privileges (the former because of class affinities with Russia, the latter more because of religio-cultural affinities) than Chechens and Ingush mountaineers. Such “ethnic” stratification of the social structure sometimes led to inter-communal conflict. But, because “autocratic Russia was a society of estates (*soslovie*) in which rank based on birth or one’s place in the Table of Ranks determined one’s privileges,” often more than one’s ethnic status, as Ronald Grigor Suny reminds us, “estate and class lines cut across allegiances to nationality for significant groups and even hindered the growth of ethnic nationalism.”⁹³ This underscores the importance, often highlighted by Suny,⁹⁴ of looking at class structure in addition and in relation to ethnic categories in order to understand social relations in the borderlands of late-imperial Russia. The land reforms and looming serf emancipation would clearly antagonize native elites in the central Caucasus, particularly in Kabarda where feudalism was most developed. Mikhail Nikolaevich and others in his administration understood that something needed to be done to placate the stratum of society that the tsarist state would rely on to maintain control in the region. In making his case for the allotment of Kabardian princes and nobles with private land, Mikhail Nikolaevich also argued that since “the upper estate will be economically weakened by a communal system...justice demands that the upper estate be compensated in order to give it a means to support its social standing.”⁹⁵ As we will see, the reforms of the 1860s did weaken Kabarda’s “upper estate” and in Kabarda and other parts of the central Caucasus, just as Suny has shown

⁹³ Suny, “Nationalism and Social Class in the Russian Revolution,” 242.

⁹⁴ See for example, *Ibid.*, 239-58; *idem*, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 144-64; *idem*, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 63-93, 119-32; *idem*, *Revenge of the Past*, 1-19, 22-23.

⁹⁵ “O raspredelenie zemel’ bol’shoi kabardy.”

for Transcaucasia, intra-communal class conflict between peasants and nobles, was often more prevalent than inter-communal conflict during the last decades of tsarist rule and 1917.⁹⁶

The tsarist state's approach to land and peasant reforms in Kabarda—balancing the need to provide peasants with land, on a communal basis so as to avoid creating a “proletariat,” with need to placate the nobility and a desire to create a basis, however weak, of private landownership—was similar to the one that the tsarist state took to the Peasant and Land Reforms in central Russia at the beginning of the decade. Among other considerations, the tsarist bureaucrat-policeman state approached the land and peasant questions, as it did most other things in the Caucasus and indeed the entire Empire, from the standpoint of security and stability. In emancipating Russia's serfs with land in 1861, the tsarist state demonstrated that it had learned from its Baltic experience, where a landless emancipation in the 1820s led to sharp ethno-social tensions between German nobles, on the one hand, and Estonian and Latvian peasants on the other. The tsarist state wanted to avoid potential social disruptions that might occur if the Kabardian feudal lords were allowed to keep all of their land and emancipated serfs were left landless.⁹⁷ However, tsarist administrators, following popular liberal economic theory, also believed that private landownership was more economically productive than communal. They also reasoned that they should sustain and grow a loyal cadre of native elites by rewarding them for their service and sacrifices (i.e. losing their serfs and giving up their claims to their ancestral lands) with private land allotments.

⁹⁶ Suny, “Nationalism and Social Class,” 244.

⁹⁷ Kумыков, *Zhinz' i obshchestvennaia deiatel'nost'*, 16.

In May 1867, Loris-Melikov, despite sharing Kodzokov's negative opinion of Kabarda's princely elite,⁹⁸ followed the Viceroy's orders and instructed Kodzokov and his Terek Estate-Land Commission to set aside land for private ownership in Kabarda. By this point, Kodzokov's Commission had finished most of its work on the land reform project.⁹⁹ Judging by his surprised and critical reaction to Loris-Melikov's order, Kodzokov was either not privy to contents of Orbeliani's 1861 project or unaware that it was serving as the basis of the reforms. Upon learning of the administration's plan to transfer land to Kabarda's nobility, writing in the name of the Commission, Kodzokov vehemently objected, asking "should the interests of the masses be sacrificed to benefit a small group of people and is it profitable for the government to pit against itself entire societies for the sake of the well-being of the few?"¹⁰⁰ After a long invective against the Kabardian elite, Kodzokov asks "what benefit will people with such a narrow outlook on life and such little energy for useful activities...bring to agriculture and the economy of the country?"¹⁰¹ Finally, Kodzokov asks "What use is it to cheat [former serfs] of their land and give the lazy, incompetent upper estate the opportunity to exploit the laboring class?"¹⁰² In a separate personal objection appended to the Commission's collective report, Kodzokov argued that "if we now allow private ownership on the basis of [noble] background and custom, then there was no reason to not recognize as just and legal all of

⁹⁸ See, for example, Loris-Melikov's criticisms of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes. "Vypiska s raporta nachal'nika Terskoi Oblasti, pomoshchniku glavnokomanduiushchego kavkazskoiu armieiu, ot 6 dekabria 1865 goda za no. 3277-m" in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 113-15.

⁹⁹ For a description and timeline of the Committee's work see "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Komissii po razboru lichnykh i pozemel'nykh prav," 171-99.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Kumykov, *Zhizn' i obshchestvennaia deiatel'nost'*, 20-21.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Kudashev, 142.

¹⁰² Quoted in *Ibid.*, 143.

the land holdings, which existed earlier and which we ourselves successfully tried to destroy.”¹⁰³ Kodzokov warned that the allotment of land to the nobility “would show the people that a thieving prince...will receive land through government decree on the basis of class...or blood rights, while someone of different background, who has spent his entire life being an diligent farmer and honest member of his society, will remain deprived of land.” Lest it appear that he was opposed to the idea of private property in principle—and he may indeed *not* have been—Kodzokov ends with a historicist argument, stating that “it is still premature to have property owners in this region because of the low educational level and the dominant form of economic activity [transhumant stock breeding], which, more than anything else, influences a society’s ability to develop.”¹⁰⁴

Kodzokov’s objections were of no avail. The Viceroy’s only response to Kodzokov was a strict reprimand for insubordination. Word spread to the Kabardian nobility that Kodzokov was trying to stop the transfer of land to them. Kodzokov began to fear for his life after a Kabardian peasant informed him that the nobility was plotting to have him assassinated.¹⁰⁵ Kodzokov reluctantly complied with Loris-Melikov’s orders and implemented the redistribution of land according the Viceroy’s project. Kodzokov chose his career (or perhaps his life) over his principles. At the end of his life, Kodzokov lamented, “trying to be useful to the state and, in particular and in a direct way, to my people, but falling on a false path, I did much that was shameful and this torments me.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³Quoted in Kумыков, *Zhin' i obshchestvennaia deiatel'nost'*, 21.

¹⁰⁴Quoted in Ibid., 22-23.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 24.

¹⁰⁶Abaev, 621.

In terms of the land question, writing in 1911, the Balkar intellectual Misost Abaev characterized Kodzokov as “a blind tool in the hands of Loris-Melikov.”¹⁰⁷ Given the way Mikhail Nikolaevich orchestrated policies from Tiflis, it would be probably be more accurate to characterize both Kodzokov and Loris-Melikov as tools in the hands of the Viceroy. In terms of Kodzokov being kept in ignorance, he was indeed blind to Mikhail Nikolaevich’s plans for the allocation of private land until May 1867.

The Preconditions for Peasant Migration to the North Caucasus

After the peasant and land reforms, the next major set of policies and processes that structured social life in the north Caucasus during the late-imperial period were those that encouraged the migration of peasants to the region from central Russia and elsewhere. In the wake of the Great Reforms, much of Russia’s peasantry suffered from a severe land hunger. This was as a result of a population boom and the fact that the terms of the serf emancipation left the Russian peasantry with less and lower-quality land at their disposal for which they had to pay, through redemption payments, far above the market value.¹⁰⁸ In order to alleviate the land shortages among the peasants of central Russia the tsarist state needed to find a way to open up new lands in other parts of the empire to Russia colonization. Additionally, many within the administration hoped that Russian peasant colonization of the empire’s diverse borderlands would promote the spread of order and the integration of these regions into the empire through the spread of Russian culture and

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Moon, “Peasant Migration,” 868-69, 886-88.

“civilization” among non-Russian peoples in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Siberia.¹⁰⁹

Official restrictions on peasant migration, kept in place because “the Tsar Liberator and his councilors...determined that it would be better for the noble economy...and for social order in general if the newly liberated serfs stayed in place,”¹¹⁰ were major impediments to Russian peasant colonization of new lands. Even after the easing of these restricts in the 1880s, the fact that peasants could not leave their commune without the approval of local elders continued to impede Russian peasant colonization of southern and eastern steppe lands.

From the late 1860s through the early 1900s, the tsarist state pursued a number of policies that directly or indirectly encouraged Slavic peasant colonization in the North Caucasus. In 1868, after Russia’s Cossacks had become a closed estate, Alexander II passed legislation that allowed peasants to rent and reside on Cossack land without joining the Cossacks.¹¹¹ The Terek and Kuban Cossacks, per capita, controlled more land than any other group in the north Caucasus. Indeed, Cossack land holdings far exceeding their productive capabilities and, therefore, many Cossack *stanitsy* readily rented out excess land to peasant newcomers. Indeed, in the late-imperial period, Russian peasants, not Cossacks, were the most significant agriculturalists on Cossack lands. These new peasant arrivals to Cossack lands of the post-reform period usually fell under the category of foreigners or *inogorodnie* (literally people of a foreign city) for legal and tax purposes. In an ironic historical twist, the colonial administration considered Cossacks and other

¹⁰⁹ Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, 146.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹¹¹ Alex Marshall, *The Caucasus under Soviet Rule* (London: Routledge, 2010), 22.

permanent-resident Slavs who had been in the Caucasus since before the peasant reforms as *korennye* or natives. “Native” Slavs enjoyed greater rights than the *inogorodnie*; they were included within local village societies, accorded local self-governance rights and a share of the communal lands. *Inogorodnie* faced a number of restrictions and burdens, especially in the 1880s and 90s: they were unable to vote or speak at village assemblies; they paid taxes often greater than those of the native Slavs but did not receive the same land-use rights in return; they were restricted in the number of cattle they could graze on communal pastures; and a series of legislative acts impeded their ability to gain residency status in their new locations.¹¹² The *inogorodnie* of the North Caucasus formed, in the words of Alex Marshall, “a discontented local underclass, who suffered under the exaction of special Cossack-instituted taxes.”¹¹³ In the late-imperial and revolutionary Caucasus social conflict centered just as much around the intra-communal conflict between Slavic settlers and their Cossack landlords as it did around the inter-communal enmity between land-rich Cossacks and land-poor mountaineers.

Economic modernization also promoted the migration of Slavic peasants and workers. The completion of the Rostov-Vladikavkaz railway in 1875 and the extension of branch lines during the late-imperial period were important prerequisites to opening up the North Caucasus to waves of peasant settlement. In addition to facilitating peasant migration, the Rostov-Vladikavkaz railway also brought Russian railway workers to the region. In 1888 local railway workers and Cossacks began to construct a new village

¹¹² S. A. Khubulova, *Krest'ianskaia sem'ia i dvor v Terskoi oblasti v kontse XIX-nachale XX v.: sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie, etnodemograficheskie i politicheskie aspekty razvitiia* (Sankt-Peterburg: Izd-vo S.-Peterburgskogo universiteta 2002), 60-63.

¹¹³ Marshall, 22.

around the railway station Kotliarevskaiia, which was situated just south of the *stanitsa* Prishibskaiia on the corridor of Cossack land along on the Georgian Military Highway separating Greater Kabarda from Lesser Kabarda. By 1913 a new branch line connected Nalchik, Kabarda's administrative center, to Kotliarevskaiia and the larger Russian railway grid.¹¹⁴ By 1917, the Cossack *stanitsy* Prokhladnaia and Mozdok, just outside the Kabardian zone of settlement, were some of the region's most important railway junctions with significant numbers of Russian railway workers. Finally, the discovery of large oil deposits near Chechen and Ingush lands between the Terek and Sunzha brought significant numbers of Russian workers to the region, particularly to the burgeoning city of Groznyi.¹¹⁵ The administrative center of Terek Oblast, Vladikavkaz, on the upper Terek near Ossetian, Ingush and Cossack settlements, also became a larger industrial city with a significant Russian worker population.¹¹⁶

It was the easing of restrictions on migration from the 1880s on that facilitated significant peasant migratory flows into Kabarda and elsewhere in Terek and Kuban Oblasts. Facing the reality of spontaneous illegal migration caused by the Russian peasantry's land hunger, the tsarist state issued the "temporary regulations" on resettlement in 1881 and the July 13 1889 permanent resettlement law. Though cautious and blunted with bureaucratic impediments, this legislation marked a change in tsarist policy from discouraging peasant migration to fostering controlled migration as means of

¹¹⁴ E.V. Burda, "Sooruzhenie Rostovo-Vladikavkazskoi zheleznoi dorogi i poiavlenie stantsii 'Kotliarevskoi' i prstantsionnogo poselka 'Prishibskogo'," *Arkhiv i obshchestvo*, no. 22 (2012), 55-57.

¹¹⁵ Marhsall, 23.

¹¹⁶ Z.V. Kanukova, *Staryi Vladikavkaz : istoriko-etnologicheskoe issledovanie* (Vladikavkaz: SOIGSI, 2008).

solving the empire-wide land question and colonizing the empire's underexploited peripheries.¹¹⁷

Relatively low land prices and rents made the North Caucasus an attractive destination for Russian peasant migrants seeking respite from their land hunger. Of all of the regions of the north Caucasus, Kuban Oblast in the northwest received the largest share of this immigration because by reducing the region's native Circassian population by 90 percent, tsarist armies opened up a vast territory across the Kuban River for colonization. While not suffered the same levels of native depopulation as the northwest Caucasus, Terek Oblast also witnessed significant peasant immigration during the late-imperial period. Between 1876 and 1896 the population of the Terek region increased by 64 percent on account of Russian and Ukrainian settlers.¹¹⁸ After migrating to Terek Oblast, Russian and European peasants lived on rented Cossack lands or lands purchased or rented from private landowners (i.e. those native elites and military officers whom the tsarist administration rewarded with land).¹¹⁹

The Transformation of Land and Social Relations in Kabarda

On November 18, 1866, representatives of the auls of the Kabardian District (*okrug*)—both Kabardian and mountaineer (i.e. Balkar)—gathered in Nalchik to hear Loris-Melikov read the Viceroy's Decree of October 1 proclaiming the beginning of the

¹¹⁷ Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, 178-79.

¹¹⁸ G. M. Kashezheva, 66.

¹¹⁹ Marshall, 168-69.

emancipation of the district's dependent estates.¹²⁰ The administration gave the nobility a year and a half to conclude emancipation contracts with their serfs, the vast majority of whom were Kabardian,¹²¹ before the government would automatically decree their emancipation on less advantageous terms.¹²² As in central Russia, the tsarist administration created mediation courts (*posrednicheskie sudy*) for the Kabardian District's four sub-districts (*uchastki*) to oversee and approve emancipation contracts.¹²³ The terms regulating emancipation contracts in Kabarda were more favorable for the Kabardian peasantry than the 1861 terms were for the Russian peasantry. As we will see, however, the opposite was true for the mountaineers of the Caucasus, including the five mountaineer societies, who, unlike the Kabardians, were emancipated without land.¹²⁴ Most former serfs, because they could not pay their redemption payments immediately, would remain temporarily bound to their lords for no more than six years. The yearly labor of a healthy temporarily-bound peasant was valued at between 35 and 70 rubles for men and 25 to 40 rubles for women. The maximum redemption payment for an able-bodied male peasant between the ages of 15 and 45 was set between 180 and 200 rubles. The maximum payment for minors (those under 15) was 150, so that they paid no more

¹²⁰ "Telegramma nachal'nika Terskoi oblasti gen. Loris-Melikova ot 18 noiabria 1866 g. Glavnomanduiushchemu Kavkazskoi armiei o tom, chto v Kabarde uzhe pristupleno k osvobozhdeniiu krest'ian," in *Krest'ianskaia reforma v Kabarde: Dokumenty po istorii osvobozhdeniia zavisimykh soslovii v Kabarde v 1867 g.*, ed. G.A. Kokiev, 1947 repr. in *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarii v trudakh G.A. Kokieva*, 734-35.

¹²¹ To the extent that there were non-Kabardians among Kabarda's serfs, they were purchased by Kabardian feudal lords from neighboring societies or, to a lesser extent by the mid-nineteenth century, they were prisoners of war.

¹²² "Osnovaniia, na kotorykh Komitet predpolagal pristupit' k osvobozhdeniiu krest'ian v Kabardinskom okruge," in *ibid.*, 732-33.

¹²³ Kuz'minov, "Agrarnaia i sotsial'naia politika," 534.

¹²⁴ F.P. Troino, "Zemel'naia аренда u gorskikh narodov Severnogo Kavkaza v kontse XIX - nachale XX vekov," *Istoriia gorskykh i kochevykh narodov Severnogo Kavkaza*, Vypusk. 3 (1978): 18

than 10 rubles per year of age. Noblemen received half of the movable property of their emancipated serfs' property.¹²⁵ Some nobles made last-ditch efforts to resist—petitioning for the right to emigrate from Russia to the Ottoman Empire with their serfs. Sensing the impending collapse of their livelihood, the nobles conceded that, even if they could not keep their serfs, they still wanted to emigrate because “it would be easier to work for people who do not know us, then work for our own peasants.”¹²⁶ Ultimately, district chief Nurid denied these requests for emigration and called 1,000 soldiers into Kabarda to reinforce his task of carrying out the emancipation.¹²⁷

By mid-March 1867, Nurid reported to Loris-Melikov that the emancipation of the serfs had been completed.¹²⁸ In the Kabardian district, the peasant reforms of 1867 resulted in the emancipation 16,499 Kabardian serfs of all categories (*unaut, loganaput, og, azat*) from a total Kabardian population of around 44,000 and 4,722 mountaineer serfs (*karakishes, chagars, kazaks*) from a total mountaineer (i.e. Balkar) population of around 10,000. While, the terms regulating the emancipation of serfs in Kabarda and the five mountaineer societies were roughly the same,¹²⁹ unlike in Kabarda, the peasant reforms in the mountaineer societies were not accompanied by land reforms. Rather the tsarist administration, in an attempt to graft the mountaineers' existing system of land

¹²⁵ Kuz'minov, “Agrarnaia i sotsial'naia politika,” 531-32.

¹²⁶ Quoted in *ibid*, 536.

¹²⁷ E.S. “Krepost'nye v Kabarde,” 30-38.

¹²⁸ “Raport nachal'nika Kabardinskogo okruga polkovnika Nurida ot 14 marta 1867 g. No. 359 ob okonchanii osvobozhdeniia zavisimykh soslovii v Kabarde s prilozheniem vedomosti o kolichestve osvobozhdennykh,” in *Krest'ianskaia reforma v Kabarde*, 773.

¹²⁹ The amount of property, movable and unmovable, divided between the lords (*taubiis*) and their dependents varied in each society. See Kumykov, *Ekonomicheskoe i kul'turnoe razvitie*, 237-38.

tenure onto Russian law, left the legal status of many lands in Kabarda's mountaineer societies unclear for decades to come.

On December 28, 1869, Alexander II signed the final version of the land redistribution project into law. This project, reluctantly authored by Kodzokov, gave special allotments to princes, members of the upper nobility, lower nobles who were former lords of their auls, and commoners who "through their service to the government obtained for themselves an honorary position."¹³⁰ The average allotment size was around 500 desiatins (1,350 acres) per princely household and 250 desiatins (675 acres) per noble household. Kabarda's 42 auls received 331,860 desiatins (896,022 acres) of communal land (farm- and meadowlands in the plains). 200 families of the Kabardian aristocracy received about 100,000 desiatins (268,785 acres) as private property. During periodic redistributions of communal lands within the auls, lords of the aul also received one tenth of the aul's land.

Much to Kodzokov's chagrin, much of Kabarda's land remained in the control of the state rather than the Kabardian peasantry. Kabarda's Zolka and trans-Malka mountain pastures (the summer pastures), totaling 225,849 desiatins (609,792 acres), which were of such great economic importance, were left in the control of the state (*za kaznoi*). The project gave the Viceroy of the Caucasus the right to determine the use of these mountain pastures and, as before, the Caucasus administration merely allocated them for the temporary use (*vremennoe pol'zovanie*) of the people of Greater Kabarda and the

¹³⁰ "Otnoshenie glavnokomanduiushchego Kavkazskoi armiei Velikogo kniazia Mikhaila Nikolaevicha k voennomu ministru D.A. Miliutinu ot 13 (25) Iiulia 1867 g. za No. 3569 o nadelenii zemlei gortsev Severnogo Kavkaza," in "Izbrannye dokumenty Kavkazskogo komiteta," 182.

neighboring five mountaineer societies (i.e. the Balkars). The administration did not include the pastures within the communal land belonging to the Kabardian people for two reasons: 1) this land would be shared between Kabardians and Balkars (see below); and 2) because the state hoped to generate extra revenue from this land. Minister of War Miliutin explained that “after the division of land according to the needs of the aul societies and private owners, all the remaining land of Greater Kabarda should be left for the state [*za kaznoi*] so that...those plots that remain completely unused after the final distribution of pastures to auls societies and private landowners could be rented out [by the state] for a set price.”¹³¹ The administration also set aside the Little Eshkakon mountain pastures to west, totaling 25,000 desiatins (67,500 acres), for the communal use by the shepherds of Lesser Kabarda. This land had previously been part of the Kislovodsk Cordon Line and used by Karachai and Kabarda. The administration left Kabarda’s forests, totaling 59,666 desiatins (161,098 acres), for the Kabardians’ communal use and created the Kabardian Forestry Department to manage them. After the administration of the Kabardian District carried out the serf emancipation in 1867 around 400 former serf families from the five mountaineer societies (Balkaria) remained landless; these mountaineers received 4,000 desiatins (10,800 acres) in Kabarda. Finally, the state retained 38,000 desiatins (102,600 acres) of Bekovich-Cherkasskii land in Lesser Kabarda for future Russian settlement. The state retained 38,000 desiatins

¹³¹ Quoted in Gaibov, 32.

(102,600 acres) of Bekovich-Cherkasskii land in Lesser Kabarda for future Russian settlement.¹³²

The land reform project, signed three years after the emancipation proclamation for the serfs the Kabardian District, gave former serfs access to land on a communal basis on similar terms as the Russian peasantry. Kabardian peasants became members of aul societies with rights to a share of their village's repartitional communal land.¹³³ In Kabarda the average allotment size was between 36 and 41 desiatins (97.2 acres and 110.7 acres) per household. This was the largest allotment size of all the ingenuous peoples of the North Caucasus. The large size of Kabarda's household allotments was the result of both the extensiveness of Kabarda's historic, though much-decreased, land holdings and the poorer quality (poorer soil) of land in Kabarda's village allotments as compared with that of the Ossetians, Ingush, and Chechens.¹³⁴ According to F.P. Troino, a specialist on land relations in the late-imperial north Caucasus, "more than two thirds of the land in [Kabarda's communal] allotments was hardly usable for cattle grazing, let alone agriculture—it was rocky cliffs filled with brush and bushes and completely infertile...the best lands, first and foremost farmland and haymaking land, went to private owners."¹³⁵ Nevertheless, the size of Kabarda's allotments, helped make up for their poor

¹³² For an overview of the final land reform legislation for Kabarda see Kuz'minov, "Agrarnye preobrazovaniia u narodov Tsentral'nogo Kavkaza," 60-67.

¹³³ Gonikishvili, "Podgotovka i provedenie krest'ianskoi reform," 134-68.

¹³⁴ Troino, 35.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 16.

quality and, with the exception of the Cossacks, Kabardian peasants were better off than their mountaineer neighbors.¹³⁶

Lesser Kabarda

According to Kodzokov's Estate-Land Commission, "because of its great significance for the resolution of the land question throughout Terek Oblast, the land question among the Lesser Kabardians and all non-Russians [*inorodtsy*] residing in Lesser Kabarda, and the question of the land rights of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes, was given top priority by the Commission." The land question in Lesser Kabarda presented the administration with particular difficulties because the usual problems of competing claims to land, disputed borders, and lack of access to land, existed within a territory whose population had become increasingly diverse in the course of the second third of the nineteenth century. As the Caucasus administration saw it, "Lesser Kabarda ha[d] the most restive and mutually hostile population of all of the North Caucasus," both because of its "diverse population, composed of various native tribes of the Caucasus different from each other in language, religion, and historical past" and because of "the general lack of understanding of land rights."¹³⁷

Ethnic diversity was not, however, a primary cause of tensions in Lesser Kabarda; rather, war-time tsarist policies were the cause of both the tensions among diverse communities and the diversity itself. The military administration's resettling of

¹³⁶ Evgenii Maksimov, "Kabardintsy: Statistiko-ekonomicheskii ocherk," in *Terskii Sbornik* No. 2 (1892): 150-51.

¹³⁷ "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Komissii po razboru lichnykh i pozemel'nykh prav tuzemtsev Terskoi Obl," 178-79.

communities with little regard for long-term impact, the lack of defined borders or land-use rights, and the administration's issuance of contradictory rulings on landownership, and not cultural-linguistic diversity per se, all led to the volatile situation in Lesser Kabarda. Indeed, inter-communal symbiosis and cooperation were essential elements of social life in the multiethnic North Caucasus, particularly in the fluid frontiers between different communities. As we have seen for earlier periods, tsarist policies—or even the mere Russian presence—was the main cause for the disruption of inter-communal symbiosis in the central Caucasus. In any event, Lesser Kabarda's diversity did not fit the tsarist administration's post-war vision for how the region should be administered.

The case of the administrative-territorial and land reforms in Lesser Kabarda demonstrates how the territorialization of nationality that we often ascribe to the Soviet era was really a policy well at work by the mid-nineteenth century.¹³⁸ As Jersild has demonstrated,¹³⁹ in the eyes of modernizing tsarist administrators, like Loris-Melikov, the North Caucasus was divided into numerous distinct tribes (in the language of the time) and, in order to properly serve the needs of each of these communities, all the members of each one should live together in a distinct administrative unit.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, for tsarist officials in the Caucasus, the fact that multiethnic Lesser Kabarda also happened to be a site of high inter-communal conflict reinforced the idea that “ethnic mixing” was

¹³⁸ Valarie Kivelson has argued that this tendency was already present in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in tsarist cartographic practices. See *Cartographies of Tsardom: the Land and its Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 192.

¹³⁹ Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*, 84-86.

¹⁴⁰ This view is reflected in Loris-Melikov's December 1865 report on the situation in Lesser Kabarda. See “Vypiska s raporta nachal'nika Terskoi Oblasti, pomoshchniku Glvanomanduiushchego Kavkazskoiu Armieiu, ot 6 dekabria 1865 goda za No. 3277-m,” in *Territorii i rasselenie*, 111-16.

inherently dangerous and opposed to orderly administration.¹⁴¹ In his 1869 report on his Commission's work, Kodzokov reflected on the explosive situation in Lesser Kabarda:

In 1863 and 1864 [Lesser Kabarda] had the most restive and mutually antagonistic population of all the tribes [sic] of the North Caucasus. This unpromising phenomenon was caused...more than anything else by the diversity [*raznorodnost'*] of the population, which was composed of different native Caucasian tribes, alien to each other in language, religion, and history, differing from each other in their ways of life and with divergent economic needs and general misunderstandings over land rights.¹⁴²

For Kodzokov and others in the modernizing tsarist state, peace and prosperity could best be met when local administrative borders coincided with ethnic borders as closely as possible. For all the similarities between the tsarist and Soviet emphases on drawing administrative borders along ethnic lines, when compared to later Soviet nationality policies, the tsarist state's commitment to ethnicizing territory appear relatively weak and the meaning of these borders on the ground, relatively insignificant.

Before applying the official land-reform model—the transformation of all the former noble lands into state land and its redistribution at the sole discretion of the government as communal and private land—to Lesser Kabarda, Kodzokov's Estate-Land Commission sought to first solve the “ethnic” or “tribal” question. Given the belief, widely held among tsarist officials and reflected in the writings of Loris-Melikov and Kodzokov,¹⁴³ that Lesser Kabarda's social tensions were a product of its cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, this question would be solved by creating an ethnically homogenous Lesser Kabarda. Kodzokov's Commission approached the issue of Lesser

¹⁴¹Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*, 85-86.

¹⁴²“Otchet o deiatel'nosti Komissii po razboru lichnykh i pozemel'nykh prav tuzemtsev Terskoi Obl,” 178-79.

¹⁴³“Vypiska s raporta nachal'nika Terskoi Oblasti, pomoshchniku Glvanomanduiushchego Kavkazskoiu Armieiu, ot 6 dekabria 1865 goda,” 111-16.

Kabarda's diversity through a combination of resettlement, land buyouts, and changes in administrative borders.¹⁴⁴

The large landholdings of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes, on which a variety of different communities had settled during the second third of the nineteenth century, were the major impediment to transforming Lesser Kabarda. By the mid-1860s, the Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands—the former Mudarov princely lands of Dzhylastantei gifted to the Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes by Ermolov—had been at the center of land disputes for three decades among rival Kabardian princes and, later, Ingush and other mountaineer settlers forced to resettle to these lands by the military administration.¹⁴⁵ Unlike most other Kabardian elites, the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis had well-documented rights to their lands originating from tsarist decrees rather than oral tradition.¹⁴⁶ The Caucasus administration could not legally appropriate these lands for redistribution by using the fiction of historic communal ownership.

During the land reforms in Lesser Kabarda, the fate of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands during the land reforms in Lesser Kabarda, most of which wound up in a private land fund for future Russian colonization, was another defeat for Kodzokov and a revealing example of the differences between his reform vision and that of the Caucasus administration in Tiflis. In 1863, at the outset of his Commission's land-reform work, Kodzokov reported to Loris-Melikov that the state needed to buyout the Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands in order to have the freedom of maneuver to redistribute land, resettle

¹⁴⁴ On the land reforms in Lesser Kabarda see Gaibov, 53-63.

¹⁴⁵ Documents on these lands disputes are included in Kuz'minov ed., *Agrarnye otnosheniia u narodov Severnogo Kavkaza. Tom II*, 253-358. See also, *AKAK. Tom VIII*, 654-69.

¹⁴⁶ *AKAK, Tom VI*, 474-77.

populations, and transform the administrative borders of Lesser Kabarda.¹⁴⁷ According to Kodzokov, “the only way to reform the Lesser Kabardian district lay in the detailed examination of the land rights of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes and...their liquidation by one means or another, and then in the correct distribution of this land among its residents.”¹⁴⁸ Kodzokov was not the first to argue for state control over the Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands. In late 1859 and early 1860, as the Caucasian Wars wound down, Dmitrii Miliutin, Commander of the General Staff of the Caucasus Army, and Prince Nikolai Evdokimov, Commander of the Armies in Terek and Kuban Oblasts, both came out in favor of purchasing the remainder of Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands. Evdokimov argued that “the lands considered to be currently belonging to the Bekovich princes are necessary for the residents of Lesser Kabarda and other natives [*tuzemtsy*] of Terek Oblast who are constrained in their land supply.”¹⁴⁹

Both Kodzokov and Evdokimov were proponents of a resolution of the land question in the North Caucasus based on communal ownership rights and the recognition of the plains as state land. Each, however, had different motives for supporting similar solutions. For Kodzokov, given his sense of the nobility’s aversion to agricultural labor and economic innovation, communal landownership was the fairest and most effective

¹⁴⁷ In 1860, Head of the General Staff of the Caucasus Army, Dmitrii Miliutin, was the first to voice the idea of purchasing the Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands to solve the land problems in Lesser Kabarda. See “1860 g. aprilia 25-go. Kopia otzyva nachal’nika Glavnogo shtaba Kavkazskoi armii general-ad’iutanta D.A. Miliutina komanduiushchemu voiskami Levogo kryla Kavkazskoi linii grafu N.I. Evdokimovu o neobkhodimosti tshchatel’no razobrat’ nasledstvennye prava Bekovichei-Cherkasskikh na zemli Maloi Kabardy v svete proshenii A. Misostova i K. Akhlova,” in *Agrarnye otnosheniia u narodov Severnogo Kavkaza, Tom II*, 266-73.

¹⁴⁸ Otchet o deiatel’nosti Komissii po razboru lichnykh i pozemel’nykh prav tuzemtsev Terskoi Obl.,” 179.

¹⁴⁹ “1860 g. noiabria 14-go. Kopia otzyva komanduiushchego voiskami Kubanskoi i Terskoi oblasti general-ad’iutanta grafu N.I. Evdokimovu nachal’niku Glavnogo shtaba Kavkazskoi armii general-ad’iutantu G.I. Filipsonu o neobkhodimosti reshit’ vopros o prinadlezhnosti zemel’ Maloi Kabardy administrativnym putem,” in *Agrarnye otnosheniia. Tom II*, 274.

system of landownership. Evdokimov's priorities are reflected in the name he gave to his favored approach to the land question in Lesser Kabarda and elsewhere: "resolution by means of administrative power."¹⁵⁰ Evdokimov understood the convoluted nature of landownership in the post-war Caucasus and the near impossibility of attaining an acceptable resolution based on legal documentation, historic rights, and customary law. This understanding convinced Evdokimov that the Caucasus administration needed to end what promised to be an endless and costly process and assert its authority in a way that would preclude further litigation. The main reason then for Evdokimov's support of a state purchase of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands was that such a move would give the administration a clean slate in solving the land question as it wished rather than deferring to the convoluted ownership rights of the nobility.

On October 24, 1863, Kodzokov initiated appeals to the state for funds to purchase the Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands.¹⁵¹ While quickly receiving approval from Loris-Melikov, the slowness of the tsarist bureaucratic machinery and the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis' efforts to get as much money from the government as possible for their land, delayed the government's buyout of the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis for several years. However, Kodzokov convinced Fedor Bekovich-Cherkasskii to sell his land at the modest rate of 1.50 rubles per *desiatina* by threatening that those who gave them the land for free could just as easily take it back for free.¹⁵² On January 20, 1866, the state purchased 56,192 desiatins (151,718 acres) from the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis for 85,152

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Beslaneev, 131.

rubles, leaving the Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes with 3,003 desiatins of their former domains. Kodzokov hoped that much of this land would be transferred to the residents of Lesser Kabarda as communal land. However, the administration, disappointing Kodzokov yet again, decided to keep much of this land for a private land fund for future Russian peasant colonization.¹⁵³

Almost immediately after reaching a settlement on the purchase of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands, the Estate-Land Commission took the first step in the ethnic unmixing of Lesser Kabarda. They forcibly resettled westward the remaining Kabardian population from Dzhyllakhstanei lands to the left bank of the Kurp River in Talostanei, home to the majority of Lesser Kabarda's Kabardian population by the mid-nineteenth century. Aside from three small Ossetian auls around the rivulet Kuian, Talostanei was populated by Kabardians residing in 15 auls between the Terek and Kurp rivers. Dzhyllakhstanei (eastern Lesser Kabarda), which was composed of lands claimed by the Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes, included a far more diverse population including: Kumyks residing in auls on the Bekovich-Cherkasskii estate; Chechens residing in the aul Psedakh and on the auls of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii estate; Ingush residing on the auls Keskem, Sagopsh and Ak-Barzoi; Kabardians residing in Abaevo, Azapshevo, Perkhichevo, Inarokovo, Zhagishevo, Indarovo, and Pshekau on the Bekovich-Cherkasskii estate; finally, Ingush auls of Chirikovo and Bezevo of the Nazran society, while not located on Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands, also used these lands for cattle grazing. On January 27,

¹⁵³ "1866 g. ianvaria 20-go. Kopia. Raport predsedatelia Terskoi soslovno-pozemel'noi komissii D.S. Kodzokova nachal'niku Terskoi oblasti general-ad'iutantu M.T. Loris-Melikovu o sostoiavsheisia pokupke u F.E. Bekovicha-Cherkasskogo zemli i proekta meropriiatii komissii v Maloi Kabarde.," in *Agrarnye otnosheniia u narodov Severnogo Kavkaza. Tom II*, 334-37

1866, the heads of the Kabardian district and its Lesser Kabardian *uchastok* met with nine Kabardian deputies to sign an official Decree. According to this decree, the 23 Kabardian auls of Lesser Kabarda would be consolidated into nine enlarged, homogeneously Kabardian auls, all of which would be located between the Terek and Kurp, in historic Talostanei.

This resettlement of the Dzhylakhstanei Kabardians to the left bank of the Kurp marked the last major reduction of the territory of Lesser Kabarda, though this would not be the last attempt. This resettlement matched the aul enlargement program being carried out in Greater Kabarda around the same time for the purposes of security, administrative ease, and a desire to free up more land. With this decree, the administration cleansed Dzhylakhstanei, once the heart of Lesser Kabarda, of its Kabardian population and freed up land for redistribution among other groups. In order to free up land for these Kabardians and to make what remained of Lesser Kabarda ethnically homogenous, the administration resettled Talostanei's three Ossetian auls to the Ossetian district.¹⁵⁴

In a reflection of the plasticity and instrumentality of ethnic categories, many residents of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii estate were ready to accept whichever ethnicity would allow them to obtain more land and remain close to their place of residence.¹⁵⁵ The elders of Lesser Kabarda's auls, not wanting to share the communal allotments with newcomers, were reluctant to take in households from the Bekovich-Cherkasskii estate claiming Kabardian identity. Of the 79 "Kabardian" households registered on the

¹⁵⁴ Otchet o deiatel'nosti Komissii po razboru lichnykh i pozemel'nykh prav tuzemtsev Terskoi Obl., 178-82.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

Bekovich-Cherkasskii estate, the elders of Lesser Kabarda's auls only accepted 34 and claimed that the rest were actually "Chechen defectors from the *Nadterechnoe Naibstvo*," who were trying to receive larger land allotments by claiming Kabardian ethnicity and remaining in Lesser Kabarda rather than resettling to Chechen lands.¹⁵⁶

The Kodzokov Commission's efforts at ethnic homogenization transformed the ethno-demographic makeup of the central Caucasus and were a first step toward the ethnic un-mixing of the region, a process normally associated with Stalinist population politics of the 1930s and 1940s and the twentieth century more generally.¹⁵⁷ The Commission attached the Ingush auls of Lesser Kabarda to the jurisdiction of neighboring Nazran-Ingush District where the majority of their co-ethnics resided.¹⁵⁸ The Land Commission resettled the Chechens residing as dependents on the Bekovich-Cherkasskii aul to the *Nadterechnoe Naibstvo* of Chechnya. "As a result of the common language and customs [of the Chechens and Ingush]," the Caucasus administration did not resettle the Chechen aul of Psedakh; rather, it annexed Psidakh to the Ingush district—where it remains the only majority Chechen village in Ingushetia.¹⁵⁹ Almost all of the Kumyk

¹⁵⁶ "Doklad predsedatelia Terskoi osnovno-pozemel'noi komissii D. S. Kodzokova nachal'niku Terskoi oblasti M. T. Loris-Melikovu o vozmozhnykh variantakh rasseleniia zhitelei aula Bekovicha," in *Agrarnye otnosheniia, Tom II*, 338.

¹⁵⁷ Most notably, Kate Brown has written on the un-mixing of the *kresy* in the Soviet Union's western borderlands. See her *Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); On Soviet ethnic cleansing see Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004). For comparative studies of the nationalities policies of the USSR and other mid-twentieth-century European states, particularly in regards to population politics and ethnic cleaning, see Peter Blitstein, "Cultural Diversity and the Interwar Conjuncture: Soviet Nationality Policy in Its Comparative Context," *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 273-93; and Francine Hirsch, "Race without the Practice of Racial Politics," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 30-43.

¹⁵⁸ "Vypiska s raporta nachal'nika Terskoi Oblasti, pomoshchniku Glvanomanduiushchego Kavkazskoiu Armieiu, ot 6 dekabria 1865 goda," 110-11.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

households of Lesser Kabarda, however, stayed. 243 Kumyk households remained on the aul of their former Bekovich-Cherkasskii lords—the descendants of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii princes also lived here—as free peasants with communal land rights. Indeed, while 12 Kumyk families left east for Kumyk district, the Land Commission resettled to the Bekovich-Cherkasskii aul an additional 49 Kumyk families that were scattered among the Kabardian auls of Lesser Kabarda because “they could expect more peace among members of their own tribe than among the Lesser Kabardians.”¹⁶⁰ The reforms made the Bekovich-Cherkasskii aul almost completely Kumyk. This aul, located eight miles southwest of Mozdok on the right bank of the Terek and named Bekovichevo (colloquially Bekovich and Giuchiukiurt in Kumyk) until the revolution, would remain administratively tied to Lesser Kabarda until World War Two.¹⁶¹

At the time of the resettlements and redistricting, the population of Lesser Kabarda totaled about 12,000 (out of a total Kabardian population of around 44,000).¹⁶² According to an April 19, 1866 Decree, this population would receive the remaining 77,000 desiatins (207,900 acres) of Talostanei land between the right bank of the Terek and left bank of the Kurp. Given that the Lesser Kabardians would lose access to the pastures of Greater Kabarda with the conclusion of the land reforms there and that the land remaining within the borders of Lesser Kabarda—land of very poor quality—was not nearly enough to satisfy their pasturage needs, the April 19 Decree also gave the Lesser Kabardian population use of the Little Eshkakon pastures west of Greater

¹⁶⁰ Doklad predsedatelia Terskoi osnovno-pozemel'noi komissii D. S. Kodzokova nachal'niku Terskoi oblasti M. T. Loris-Melikovu o vozmozhnykh variantakh rasseleniia,” 340.

¹⁶¹ On Lesser Kabarda's Kumyks see Abas Datsiev, *Kizliar-name: istoriia tersko-kumyskykh kumykov* (Makhachkala, privately printed, 2004).

¹⁶² “Gorskaia letopis'” in *Sbornik Svedenii o Kavkazskikh Gortsakh*. Vyp. 1 (1868): 6.

Kabarda's Zolka and trans-Malka mountain pastures, totaling 25,000 desiatins (67,500 acres), for their summer transhumance. Before this 1866 land transfer, Kabardians and Karachai used these pastures jointly. The Little Eshkakon pastures would become a point of contestation between the two communities in the future.¹⁶³

Mikhail Nikolaevich insisted on a mixed private-communal system of land tenure for Lesser Kabarda. The Viceroy stipulated that the Land Commission's allotment draft for Lesser Kabarda include 4,000 desiatins (10,800 acres) for private ownership.¹⁶⁴ This last point of the April 1866 Decree reflects the tsarist administration's belief that it had to prop up the Kabardian nobility as a means of maintaining order and stability. It also demonstrates the ways which concerns of ethnicity *and* class influenced the process of land reform and, more generally, imperial integration in the central Caucasus. In the event, the Land Commission, under pressure from the Viceroy's office, transferred nearly three times as much land to the nobles and princes of Lesser Kabarda than Mikhail Nikolaevich's decree had originally stipulated. Of the 77,000 desiatins remaining in Lesser Kabarda, 11, 700 desiatins went to 41 members of the Lesser Kabardian elite.¹⁶⁵

By the mid-1860s, reacting to the social disruptions caused by the Great Reforms, the Caucasus administration, much like the tsarist state generally, prioritized order and stability over concerns for the economic well-being of the region's native communities. By 1865, as far as Mikhail Nikolaevich and the Caucasus administration in Tiflis were concerned, they had attained the desired administrative resolution to the land question in

¹⁶³ Gaibov, 54-55.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Kuz'minov, "Ot voennogo pokoreniia k poisku putei integratsii," 455.

the most important plains regions of the north Caucasus: Kabarda's elite recognized Kabarda's land as communal property in exchange for promises—later broken—that they would regain inalienable control of their mountain pastures and that the state would not interfere in their internal affairs; the Kumyk nobility agreed to give up half of their land for peasant communal ownership.¹⁶⁶ While the administration was still concerned with the needs of the land-poor and landless peoples of Terek Oblast, new priorities for the future of the region took precedence. The Caucasus administration wanted to forge a class of loyal native elites by providing them with allotments of private land and giving them a stake in local governance. Tsarist policymakers also hoped that the (re)landed nobility would invest in their land and spur on economic growth in the North Caucasus. Even if the nobility proved unable to flourish without their serfs, the administration realized that they would sell off their lands to those who could, be they native or, preferably, Russian.¹⁶⁷ First and foremost, the administration wanted to use the land reforms to create a land fund for future Russian colonization of the North Caucasus. This priority of promoting Russian settlement is reflected in Loris-Melikov's December 1865 memorandum to Viceroy Mikhail Nikolaevich's assistant on the administration's plans for the Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands and Lesser Kabarda in general.

Lesser Kabarda, by virtue of its location...has always had an intrinsic significance. The impending transfer of our main postal road between Vladikavkaz and Prokhladnoe, from the left bank to the right bank of the Terek, will...give this part of the Oblast even greater significance. The complete absence here of the Russian population necessary to secure and provision this road and provide services to porters and travelers makes it necessary to construct one or two *stanitsy*. Under such conditions, it would be a big mistake to leave such large

¹⁶⁶ Gaibov, 120-25.

¹⁶⁷ Kumykov, *Ekonomicheskoe i kul'turnoe razviti*, 215, 218.

land holdings in the hands of the Bekovich princes because the current members of this family, given their constitution, would not add anything of substance to either the material or the moral forces of the country, and it would be an extreme mistake not to buy these lands at the agreed-upon lucrative price...The remaining free land [after the allotment of the Chechens and Ingush of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands], totaling about 38,000 desiatins...should be divided into 500-to-1,500-desiatin allotments and given as rewards...to officials serving in the local administration...[G]iven the deep transformations that the native population of Terek oblast is now going through, the introduction of Russian landowners into Lesser Kabarda, having a special significance because of their middle-class position, will ensure the security of the region more than the force of weapons.¹⁶⁸

Of the 56,192 desiatins purchased from the Bekovich-Cherkasskiis in 1866, the Estate-Land Commission, under orders from the Caucasus administration, subsequently added 5,969 desiatins (16,116 acres) of former Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands on the right bank of the Kurp to Lesser Kabarda, most of which went to Lesser Kabardian princes as private land. 16,110 desiatins (43,497 acres) of the former Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands went to the Ingush and Chechen auls transferred to the Nazran-Ingush District. The largest share of Bekovich-Cherkasskii land, the remaining 38,000 desiatins (102,600), went to a land fund for future Russian settlement.¹⁶⁹

The Peasant Reforms and Kabardian-Balkar Relations

By the mid-nineteenth century, of the former Kabarda-centered interethnic system, the only groups that remained dependent upon the landowning nobility of Kabarda were the five mountaineer societies of Balkar, Khulam, Bezengi, Chegem and Urusbii—collectively, today's Balkars. To be sure, individual Ossetian, Ingush, and Karachai

¹⁶⁸ "Vypiska s raporta nachal'nika Terskoi Oblasti, pomoshchniku glavnokomanduiushchego kavkazskoiu armieiu, ot 6 dekabria," 113-15.

¹⁶⁹ Gaibov, 55-56.

communities still remained dependent upon Kabardian-controlled lands. But, as a whole, the five mountaineer societies still depended upon Kabardian plains for winter pasturages. Moreover, due to their lack of arable land, the five mountaineer societies depended on trade with their Kabardian neighbors for grain. The period from the peasant reforms of the 1860s to 1917 witnessed great changes in the balance of land-use and ownership between Kabardians and the five mountaineer societies and, ultimately, the creation of new ethno-territorial borders between these two peoples and new social boundaries within these communities. The transformations during this period also created the foundations for continued coexistence of Kabardians and Balkars within a common administrative-territorial unit. Given the symbiotic (though unequal) economic relations that continued to exist between Kabardians and Balkars the delimitation of these borders was an especially contentious and delicate matter

Three centrifugal forces pushed the population of the five mountaineer societies to leave their valleys and settle the Kabardian foothills before and during the land reforms: 1) the natural desire to escape their perennial landlessness in the mountains in light of ethno-demographic and political changes in Kabarda (i.e. the decimation of Kabarda's population during the early nineteenth century and the near-total collapse of Kabardian princely authority); 2) a population explosion resulting in a near doubling of the Balkar population from 1834 to 1862; and 3) the monopolizing of lands within the five mountaineer societies by local Balkar nobles (*taubiis*) after the peasant emancipation

in 1867.¹⁷⁰ These factors led to repeated petitions from Balkar representatives to the colonial administration requesting land allotments in Kabarda to ease their land hunger and resultant economic burdens. The tsarist administration proved relatively amenable to the Balkars' requests. In total, the Balkar societies received nearly 116,000 acres of land below their mountain valleys on the Kabardian foothills during the post-reform period.¹⁷¹

One of the earliest tasks of Kodzokov's Estate-Land Commission was the drawing of borders between Kabarda and its five contiguous mountaineer societies (i.e. Balkaria). No official border existed between Kabarda and its Balkar neighbors. Rather, as was the standard before the modern period,¹⁷² natural borders, in this case the mountains—"the high snowy range,"¹⁷³ or "the black mountains"¹⁷⁴ [i.e. where the forested foothills stopped and the barren mountains began]—were the most commonly cited and recognized boundary separating Kabardian fiefdoms from (Balkar) mountaineer lands.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, since there is no clear separation between the foothills and the mountains, before the 1860s, there existed a Kabardino-Balkar frontier, akin to Sahlins' "boundary zone,"¹⁷⁶ but not a political or administrative border. Kodzokov's Commission needed to establish Kabarda's borders before it could determine how much land Kabarda controlled and then set about redistributing this land among Kabardian aul societies.

While the Caucasus administration had already delimited Greater Kabarda's northern and

170 On these factors see Muratova 328-34 and L. Babich and V. V. Stepanov, *Istoricheskaia dinamika etnicheskoi karty Kabardino-Balkarii* (Moscow: Institut etnologii i antropologii im. Miklukho-Maklaia RAN, 2009), 36-41.

171 Dumanov, introduction to *Territorii i rasselenie*, 9

172 See Sahlins, 1-9.

173 G ldenst dt, 225.

174 "Ivan Fedorovich Blaramberg (1830, 1835, 1837, 1840), Kabardintsy," in *Territorii i rasselenie*, 26.

175 More specific markers, usually stones or burnt coals, also existed to separate some feudal domains.

Kumykov, *Ekonomicheskoe i kul'turnoe razvitie*, 132.

176 Sahlins, 6.

eastern borders with the Terek Cossacks and its western border with the Karachai of Kuban Oblast, Kabarda's southern borders with the Balkars remained officially non-existent as of 1863.¹⁷⁷

Kodzokov's Kabardian ethnicity interfered in his ability to smoothly conduct policies concerning the five mountaineer societies. In delimiting the Kabardino-Balkar border and adjudicating the disputes that arose in the process, Kodzokov had to temper his allegiance (real or perceived) to his native Kabarda or, more precisely, the Kabardian peasantry, with his mediatory role as a tsarist official. Despite his efforts to appear neutral, however, in the eyes of the Balkars, Kodzokov's Kabardian ethnicity precluded his neutrality. Indeed, in their national historiography from the late-tsarist period to the present, Balkar intellectuals have consistently blamed Kodzokov's border delimitation for the continuing land problems of their people.¹⁷⁸ To some Balkars, Kodzokov's efforts at border delimitation were another episode in a long history of Kabardian oppression of their smaller Balkar neighbors.

Immediately after the Declaration of August 20, Kodzokov set about trying to get Kabardian and Balkar representatives to come to an agreement on their borders. On September 18, 1863, after it had become clear that Kabardians and Balkars had opposing ideas about what the border should look like, representatives of the two peoples—nearly

¹⁷⁷ Kudashev, 137.

¹⁷⁸ Abaev was the first to paint Kodzokov an anti-Balkar Kabardian nationalist in *Balkaria*, 621-623; Umar Aliev offers the same interpretation in his "Dokladnaia Zapiska" *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii* (RGASPI) 558/1/ 5629: ll. 17-18; This type of interpretation was not politique during most of the Soviet period. Post-Soviet Karachai-Balkar historians have attacked Kodzokov land-reform policies for being anti-Balkar with renewed vigor. See, for example, Islam Miziev, "Iz istorii pozemel'nykh sporov mezhdru Balkariei i Kabardoi," *Balkariia* 26, no. 4 (2007): 12-28.

all officers in the tsarist army¹⁷⁹—met on the neutral territory of the Ossetian aul of Major-General Tuganov. The goal of this meeting was “to determine the borders of Greater Kabarda..., discuss the extent to which the Balkar, Bezengi, Khulam, Chegem, and Urusbi mountain tribes are in need of lands on the plains outside of the valleys that belong to them...[and] peacefully settle their dispute.” Each group presented their version of the correct borders. The Kabardians offered the most detailed description of the border, one that relegated the Balkars strictly their mountain valleys. While disputing specific details of the Kabardian version of the border in a few places, the representatives of the five mountaineer societies—whose shepherds always depended upon the use of plains pastures in Kabarda in autumn and spring—claimed that “since the establishment of the Russian government in the Caucasus, the mountaineer societies have not had a defined border with Kabarda and the mountaineers have not encountered impediments to their permanent use of pastures even in locations below [i.e. in lowland areas north of] Kabardian auls.” The representatives of the five mountaineer societies were arguing, not without basis, that the very idea of border delimitation went against past historical practice. Ensign Kuchuk Barasbiev, a representative from the Chegem Society, continued that “it would be ruinous for their stockbreeding economy if they are left without a place on the plains for pasturing below the [mountain] valleys occupied by the mountaineer societies.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹Civil or military service was way for mountaineer hereditary nobles to enjoy the privileges of the Russian nobility. Military service was the preferred and most accessible option.

¹⁸⁰“Doklad o razgranichenii zemel’ mezhdru kabardintsami i prochimi obshchestvami. 24 oktiabria 1863 g.,” in *Territorii i rasselenie*, 91-92.

In an effort to bridge the gulf between the Kabardian and Balkar approaches to the border, Kodzokov called upon the representatives of both sides to validate their testimonies by swearing oaths on the Qur'an. According to Kivelson, having non-Orthodox peoples swear oaths based on their own religious practices, a common Russian imperial practice since Muscovite times, "did not spring from tolerance or from reluctance to enforce Russian and Orthodox domination but rather from a pragmatic acceptance of the greater efficacy of guaranteeing loyalty with the wrath of the relevant deities."¹⁸¹ Each side was willing to swear an oath; however, they could not reach an agreement as to what they were swearing to.¹⁸² The Kabardian delegates demanded that they swear oaths to specifically demarcated borders. The Balkars would only swear that they controlled land below the Kabardian auls before the Kabardians entered this region [i.e. between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries] and that in recent times [i.e. since the Russian conquest of Kabarda] they used these lands without payment and that they did not have a border with Kabarda."¹⁸³

Each side believed that what they said was the truth. The Kabardian representatives described a border which, prior to the Russian conquest, functioned as a barrier between the Mountaineer societies and Kabarda's princely fiefdoms. But, before the modern period, borders in the Caucasus were fluid frontiers that changed frequently depending on balance of power among different feudal lords. While the border described by the Kabardian representatives still existed in the sense that the administration and the

¹⁸¹ Kivelson, 167.

¹⁸² "Doklad o razgranichenii zemel' mezhdru kabardintsami i prochimi obshchestvami," 92.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

local population generally understood where historic Kabardian territory stopped and where Balkar territory began, Balkar shepherds had, since Ermolov's conquest of Kabarda in the 1820s, taken advantage of the Kabardian elites' weakened position and disregarded this border in many (though not all) places and freely used the plains below it for autumn and spring pasturage.¹⁸⁴ These were lands that remained unused after large numbers of Kabardian lords either died (through plague and warfare) or fled across the Kuban to unconquered Circassian societies.¹⁸⁵ After the 1820s, the Balkars free use of these pastures caused conflict with Kabardian nobles attempting to reassert their land rights.¹⁸⁶ When Balkars refused renew their former tribute payments to the Kabardians for the use of their pastures, Kabardian lords would extract payments by force by stealing cattle.¹⁸⁷ The Balkars' claims that they once controlled the Kabardian plains were also not untrue. Judging by folklore, Turkic toponyms, and archeological evidence, at least some of the Balkars' progenitors inhabited the plains of the central Caucasus at the time of the Mongol invasions and before the rise of Kabarda.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ M.I. Barazbiev, *Etnokul'turnye svyazi balkartsev i karachaevtsev s narodami kavkaza v XVIII—nachale XX veka* (Nalchik: El'brus, 2000), 24-25; Kiz'minov, "Agrarnye preobrazovaniia," 63-64; N.P. Tul'chinskii, "Piat' gorskikh obshchestv Kabardy," *Terskii Sbornik* 5 (1903): 174-75.

¹⁸⁵ "Dekabria 18.-Dokaldnaia zapiska kantseliarii voennogo ministru 'ob otpravlenii deputatsii ot gorskikh plemen v Peterburg' i vozmozhnosti udovletvoreniia ee pros'b o pribavlenii Balkarii zemli i naimenovanii starshin taubiiami," in *Territorii i rasselenie*, 83-84.

¹⁸⁶ "1864 g. noiabria 11.—Proshenie zhitel'ei Balkarskogo, Khulamskogo, Bezengievskogo obshchestv o zhelanii vseгда 'imet' mirnuiu zhinz' i družbu' s kabardinskim narodom i ob ustranении prepiatstvii k etomu pri peshenii zemel'nogo voprosa," in *Dokumenty po istorii Balkarii*: 40-90 g.g., 85-86.

¹⁸⁷ Tul'chinskii, 175.

¹⁸⁸ The origins or "ethnogenesis" and formation of the Karachai and Balkars have been the subjects of much debate and discussion. See, for example, *Materialy nauchnoi sessii po probleme proiskhozhdeniia balkarskogo i karachaevskogo narodov*, 22-26 iyunia 1959 g (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe knizhnoe izd-vo, 1960); for a nuanced discussion of how this debate has played into ethno-nationalist political discourse see Shnirel'man, *Byt' alanami*.

The Kabardians' claims about the border and their historic landownership rights ultimately held greater weight for the tsarist administration than those of the Balkars. The Kabardian representatives had the advantage because, in 1852, Tsar Nicholas II set a precedent by refusing the request of the Balkar delegation to St. Petersburg to transfer what the Tsar's advisors determined were Kabardian lands land to Balkar ownership.¹⁸⁹ The Tsar based his decision on ethnographic materials collected by tsarist military officials in the 1830s and 1840s, which described the territory controlled by Kabarda and its neighbors.¹⁹⁰ Thus, while the state had not demarcated an official border between Kabarda and its five mountaineer societies, administrators understood that one existed and they had an approximate idea of what it looked like. Moreover, the Kabardians could describe a border based on natural and artificial markers and they were ready to swear to these borders or have their other neighbors (i.e. the Ossetians or the Karachai) testify to them.¹⁹¹

After long arguments, in which a multiethnic cast of "Russian" officials played the roles of mediators or referees shaping the resolution of the dispute to suit their purposes, the Kabardian and Balkar delegates came to an agreement. They would allow Kodzokov and an Ossetian member of his Commission, Lieutenant Mikhail Baev, to delimit the borders "according to their own judgment," under the condition that they take into consideration "that without the provision of land on the plains to the mountaineer

¹⁸⁹ "Report upravliaiushchego voennym ministerstvom glavnokomanduiushchemu otdel'nyy Kavkazskim korpusom o vosstanovlenii titular taubii feodalam Balkarii i ob otklonenii pros'by obshchestv o zemle," in *Territorii i rasselenie*, 85-86.

¹⁹⁰ Muratova, 182

¹⁹¹ "Doklad o razgranichenii zemel' mezhdru kabardintsami i prochimi obshchestvami," 92.

societies, [they] will be deprived of a means to preserve [their] cattle breeding.”¹⁹²

Ethnically Balkar historians have asserted that the absence of a Balkar on the Commission is an indication of its inherent bias.¹⁹³ But the inclusion of the Ossetian official Baev and the choice of an Ossetian aul as a meeting place belie this assertion because of the close relationship between Balkars and Ossetians. The two peoples have a history of mutual friendship and largely peaceful interethnic relations. Indeed, Balkars and Ossetians, both traditionally mountain dwellers and purported descendants of the ancient Alans who ruled the region in the Middle Ages, had more in common with each other than with the Kabardians. Relations between the western-most Ossetian society of Digora and the Balkar society (Balkaria’s eastern-most, and largest, society) were particularly close. Both Digorans and Balkars shared extensive mountain pastures along the Khazny-Su (Khazny-Don in Ossetian) River. Throughout the mid-nineteenth century, until the tsarist administration created a separate Ossetian district, observers often referred to the Balkars as Ossetians. It was standard practice to appoint members of one Caucasian people to serve as tsarist superintendents over another. From the creation of the position of Superintendent of the Five Mountaineer Societies of Kabarda in 1846 until the administrative reforms of the 1860s, Ossetian noblemen had the longest tenure in this position.¹⁹⁴

Kodzokov’s report on the border delimitation reveals his understanding of the link between land and inter-communal and class relations in the central Caucasus. In

¹⁹² “No. 23—1863 goda, sentiabria 18 dnia,” in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 90-91.

¹⁹³ See footnote 178.

¹⁹⁴ Muratova, 190-97.

Kodzokov's report, moreover, we see a tsarist official, a Kabardian no less, arguing, as local Soviet officials would do almost sixty year later, for the need to right past wrongs. Kodzokov pushed for social and cultural engineering in the name of historical fairness. As we have seen, Kodzokov derided Kabarda's landed nobility for their regressive role within Kabardian society. Kodzokov was also critical, though to a lesser extent, of the way the Kabardian feudal lords historically stifled the development of their neighbors. For example, in the introduction to his summary report of his Commission's work, Kodzokov wrote "[W]ith the conquest of Kabarda...the existing order changed noticeably for the better...After entering Russian protection, the Ossetians, weak and completely oppressed until this time, breathed freely for the first time."¹⁹⁵ Kodzokov reported that a subsequent survey of the border found the Kabardians' version of the border "plausible." However, Kodzokov continued, "these borders were the result of the power and advantage over the mountaineer societies that [the Kabardian elite] once enjoyed, but with the [impending] declaration of independence of the former from the Kabardians, there is an obligation to bring the [Balkar] mountaineers from out of the insularity that has so far condemned them to the region that belongs to them [i.e. the mountains]."¹⁹⁶

According to Kodzokov's report, the state was also obliged to "provide them with a means to develop cattle breeding—their only economic activity—in the form of pastures on the plains near the exits of the mountain valleys."¹⁹⁷ Kodzokov's

¹⁹⁵ "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Komissii po razboru lichnykh i pozemel'nykh prav tuzemtsev Terskoi Obl.," 171.

¹⁹⁶ "Doklad o razgranichenii zemel' mezhdru kabardintsami i prochimi obshchestvami," 93.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

redistribution of land along ethnic lines between Kabardians and Balkars, which was occurring around the same time as similar ethnically-defined territorial changes in Lesser Kabarda, had great long-term significance. Among other issues, the settling of Balkar mountaineers on formerly Kabardian lands would make any future administrative separation of Kabardians and Balkars a highly problematic process. Kodzokov described the transhumance patterns of the Balkars' that made them dependent upon Kabarda:¹⁹⁸ "their valleys are good places [for cattle-breeding] in summer and winter, but the mountaineers need pastures in spring through the middle of May, because grass does not grow in the mountains until then, and in autumn, because mountain frosts kill the feed. During these times of year, mountain cattle and sheep descend to the plains; this is why the mountaineers have been, and are still, dependent upon the Kabardians." Given the mountaineers' economic dependence on Kabardian land, Kodzokov concluded that "in order to protect the mountaineer societies from the arbitrary actions of their neighbors and give them a means to a stable economy, it is possible to transfer to them several allotments below the forest of the Kabardian lands and the will provide them access to the plains." Kodzokov's project for the delimitation of the five mountaineer societies and Greater Kabarda went further and called for "pushing part of the borders of the Kabardian lands away from the mountain zone, in order to provide the mountaineer societies with pastures on the plains." In the delimitation of the borders between Greater Kabarda and the five mountaineer societies, the Kodzokov Commission ultimately called for 40,000

¹⁹⁸ In general the tsarist state encouraged the expansion of agriculture among Kabardians and mountaineers. See Mesiats, 67, 78. But transhumance did not present the state with the same administrative and security problems as nomadic pastoralism.

desiatins (108,000 acres) of Kabardian land to be transferred to the Balkars for their economic needs.¹⁹⁹

Lest one assume that Kodzokov was being totally altruistic in his apparent sympathy toward the Balkars' plight—and this is not to say that he didn't sympathize—Kodzokov also tried to use the border delimitation, in addition to the Declaration of August 20, as a bargaining chip in aid of goal of securing Kabardian control of the Zolka and trans-Malka mountain pastures, which had been state land under the control of the Cossack Cordon Line since Ermolov's conquest and only allocated for the temporary use of the Kabardian people since 1845. In his report to Loris-Melikov on the delimitation of Kabarda's border with the five mountaineer societies, Kodzokov argued that by conceding land to land-poor Balkars, "the Kabardians should be rewarded...with two allotments from the Cordon lands [i.e. the trans-Malka and Zolka mountain pastures] that they use" and "have always belonged to them," but "which have not been recognized as [permanent] Kabardian land."²⁰⁰ One of the problems with Kodzokov's argument was that Balkars, with Kabardian permission, also historically utilized the expansive mountain pastures along Kabarda's western frontier. While one could argue that in requesting that these pastures be recognized as Kabardian, Kodzokov was hoping to keep all of this land for the Kabardians. There are two problems with such an argument. First, Kabardian concerns over these pasture lands had more to do with fears of the state's ability to dispose of this land at will and, as the state had in the past, cut off Kabardian access to it or potentially sell off the land. Second, when the state rejected Kodzokov's request, the

¹⁹⁹ "Doklad o razgranichenii zemel' mezhdru kabardintsami i prochimi obshchestvami," 93.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 93-94.

Kabardian elites proved amenable to sharing the pastures with the five mountaineer societies.

Once again, Kodzokov's vision for land reforms did not come to fruition. In the land reform legislation, signed into law in late 1869, the tsarist administration gave Kabardians communal use of the trans-Malka pastures, but it did not recognize Kabardian ownership of this land. Rather, the administration gave this land the status of "state reserve land" (*kazennye zapasnye zemli*).²⁰¹ Much to Kodzokov's chagrin, the state could dispense with this land at will and, if it so chose, use this land for Russian settlement or sell it to wealthy native elites. Moreover, the Kabardians were to share the trans-Malka and Zolka pastures with the Balkars of the five mountaineer societies. Ten years later in 1879, a formal agreement stipulated which parts of the trans-Malka and Zolka pastures would be used by the shepherds of each aul society from Kabarda and the five mountaineer societies.²⁰² This stipulation is significant because, similar to the land transfers to landless Balkars, it prefigured the continued coexistence of Kabardians and Balkars in a common administrative-territorial unit, in this case on the basis of shared communal pastures.

On May 18, 1864, Tsar Alexander II approved Kodzokov's "Project for the Delimitation of the Kabardians the Neighboring Mountaineer Societies," writing in an order "to execute" (*Ispolnit'*) at the bottom of it.²⁰³ By order of the Chancellery for the

²⁰¹ Meslats, 143.

²⁰² "Spisok obshchestvam i otdel'nym seleniiam B. i M. Kabardy s pokazaniem uchastkov, naznachennykh im dlia pol'zovaniia iz zapasnykh pastbishchnykh mest i polosy s Malo-Eshkakonskim uchastkom i Zol'skim uchastkom soglasno ukazu Soveta Namestnika Kavkazskogo," in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 165-67.

²⁰³ "Vypiska iz zhurnala Kavkazskogo komiteta 18 maiia 1864 g. V. S.-Peterburga No. 540," in *Territoriia i rasselenie*, 263.

Administration of Caucasian Mountaineers, upon receiving the Tsar's approval, Kodzokov's Commission was to immediately set about surveying, physically demarcating, and drafting a map of the border.²⁰⁴

The Peasant Reforms in the Five Mountaineer Societies

During the course of the border surveying and demarcation, it came to light that the Balkars would need significantly more land to satisfy their needs. These additional land needs were the result of the peasant reforms in Balkaria and, in particular, the fact that many Balkar serfs were freed without land or lost their land due to the terms onerous terms of their emancipation settlements. The reforms ultimately gave the Balkar nobility (*taubiis*) control of over half of all land in the mountain zone and made over four-hundred Balkar families, or one-fifth of the population, landless.²⁰⁵

The tsarist administration placed great emphasis on an expeditious and careful execution of land reforms in the plains of the North Caucasus. This territory was the most sought-after, most prone to disputes, and held the greatest potential for economic development and Russian colonization. By contrast, the tsarist administration had no strategic plans for the development of the mountain zone. As usual, Kodzokov's priorities were different from those of Viceroy Mikhail Nikolaevich and his administration. During the lead up to the emancipation of the Balkar serfs, Kodzokov hoped to extend his plans for communal landownership to Kabarda's five mountaineer societies. Indeed, given the land shortages in the mountains, a more equitable distribution of land was arguably even

²⁰⁴ "Nachalniku Terskoi oblasti iz kantseliarii po upravleniiu kavkazskimi gortsami," 95-96.

²⁰⁵ Tul'chinskii, 186.

more important here than in the plains. However, the dearth of arable land meant that Balkar landowners valued their land much more than the slash-and-burn agriculturalists of Kabarda. The Balkars expended great efforts on the terrace plots, painstakingly clearing them of rocks and brush, bringing up fresh soil from the foothills, and constructing networks of irrigation canals.²⁰⁶ According to late-imperial sources, Kodzokov attempted to get the Balkar *taubiis* to sign a similar declaration to the one signed by the Kabardian nobility on August 20, 1863, by which they would give up their ownership rights to their lands. According to the fin-de-siècle Balkar intellectual Misost Abaev, who was critical of Kodzokov and attributed to him great bias in favor of Kabarda in his role as Chairman of the Estate-Land Commission, “Kodzokov, following the same goal as in Kabarda, also attempted to persuade the *taubiis* to serve up a similar declaration on the absence of landownership in the mountains, but they rejected this lie.”²⁰⁷ In his 1913 book, *Historical Accounts of the Kabardian People*, Vladimir Kudashev, a baptized and russified Kabardian like Kodzokov, reports that the *taubiis*’ refusal [to recognize their societies’ lands as communal] was so categorical that Kodzokov decided to never visit the Balkars out of fear for his life.”²⁰⁸ According to Kudashev, after Kodzokov’s disappointment, Loris-Melikov called upon the Balkar deputies to meet with him in Vladikavkaz. According to the family of Izmail Urusbiev, one of the then young Balkar nobles invited to the meeting:

²⁰⁶For descriptions of the difficulties of cultivating land in the mountain valleys of the Balkar societies see Abaev, 587; Tul’chinskii, 167, 179-83; and “1909 g. oktiabria 29.—Vypiska iz zhurnala prisutstviia oblastnogo pravleniia Terskoi oblasti ob itogakh raboty Komissii po zemleustroistvu naseleniia Nagornoï polosy Terskoi oblasti,” in *Dokumenty po istorii Balkarii; konets XIX-nachalo XX v.* (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1962), 126-34.

²⁰⁷ Abaev, 611.

²⁰⁸ Kudashev, 165.

the conversation between...Loris-Melikov and Izmail...regarding the declaration of the Balkar land communal took place first in the former's general reception hall. Loris-Melikov...asked Urusbiev what right he had to his land. An enraged Izmail Urusbiev pulled out his sabre, stabbed the end of it into the parquet floor, and exclaimed, 'These are my rights! My ancestors conquered and controlled this land, and I will protect it with arms.'...Loris-Melikov invited Urusbiev into his office, had a long conversation with him, and, in parting, apparently said 'Attaboy, hold on stronger to your rights.'²⁰⁹

The Balkar nobility would continue to own their lands until the establishment of Soviet power in 1920.

As a result of the administration's lack of success and, with the exception of Kodzokov and possibly Loris-Melikov, relative disinterest in getting the Balkars to turn over their land to the discretion of the state, in 1867 the tsarist administration introduced the peasant reforms into the Kabarda's five mountaineer societies without conducting land reform.²¹⁰ As a result, the *taubiis* lost their serfs and tribute-paying peasants (*karakishes*, *iasakchis*, *chagars*, and *kazaks*) but kept most of their land. The only category of formerly dependent Balkar peasants to have their land rights recognized after emancipation was the *karakish*. According to Kabardian district head Nurid's ruling, the *karakish*, the largest category of dependent mountaineers, should receive ownership rights to their land because, despite the fact that in principle the lands in their possession belong to the *taubiis*, in practice they had "inalienable property rights to the land, but they could not sell it, except in cases of obvious necessity, without the permission of the *taubiis* to whom they were subordinate."²¹¹ According to an 1864 agreement between the

²⁰⁹Kudashev reports this in *ibid*.

²¹⁰T.Kh. Kumykov, "K voprosu krest'ianskoi reform v Balkarii v 1867 g." *Sbornik statei po istorii Kabardy i Balkarii* 6 (1957): 105-13.

²¹¹"Dokladnaia zapiska o zavisimyykh sosloviiakh v Kabardinskom okruge i ob ikh obiazannostiakh v otnoshenii vladel'tsev, prilozhennaia k raportu nachal'nika Terskoi oblasti ot 8 sentiabria 1866 g. za no.

taubiis and *karakish* of the five mountaineer societies, the *karakishi* had the following obligations vis-à-vis the *tabuiis*: they could only sell or transfer their land to other members of their extended family; they had to obtain their *taubii*'s permission to conclude sales and transfers; each household paid a small tax in kind to its superordinate *taubii* and performed limited seasonal corvée.²¹² Moreover, liberated *karakish*, unable to make their redemption payments, gave up between a third and half of their moveable property and land—land for which they previously paid tribute and performed other feudal obligations to *taubiis*—to their former lords. The remaining categories of dependent mountaineers: enserfed peasants (*iasakchi* and *chagars*) and household servants (*kazaks*) were freed without any land.²¹³

The *taubiis* also acquired land through a traditional loan system called *begenda*.²¹⁴ Poor Balkar shepherds gave their land to wealthy *taubiis* for money or, more often, sheep and cattle. The *taubii* lenders had complete control of the land, including the right to sell it, for the length of the loan. Moreover, the *taubiis*, through their control and manipulation of the local courts (the Mountaineer Oral Court [*Gorskii Slovesnyi Sud*]), gradually seized the communal pastures and meadows that abutted their private plots.²¹⁵

These processes and policies led to severe land shortage among most Balkars in the post-reform period.²¹⁶ Importantly, these land shortages forced landless and land-poor

2823 na imia pomoshchnika Glavnokomanduiushchego Kavkazskoi armiei," in *Krest'ianskaia reforma v Kabarde*, 686.

²¹² Kумыков, K voprosu krest'ianskoi reform," 107.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Tul'chinskii, 210-12.

²¹⁵ "1909 g. oktiabريا 29.—Vypiska iz zhurnala prisutstviia oblastnogo pravleniia Terskoi oblasti ob itogakh raboty Komissii po zemleustroistvu naseleniia Nagornoй polosy," 130-31.

²¹⁶ Muratova, 285; Tul'chinskii, 168-69, 175.

Balkars to seek out land on the Kabardian foothills, leading to increased land tensions between Kabardians and Balkars during this period. In four of the Balkar mountaineer societies, 139 *taubii* families, or six percent of the population, controlled an average of 20 percent of the farmland, 43 percent of the hayfields, 30 percent of the pastures, and 33 percent of the forests. Land disparities were greater in the Urusbii society; here the Urusbiev family considered almost all of the land as their property,²¹⁷ though the local peasantry was fighting this in the courts.²¹⁸

The peasant reforms in Kabarda's five mountaineer societies demonstrate again the ways which both ethnic and class concerns shaped the empire's approach administration and social control in the region. In deferring to the interests of the ruling class of the empire, here the *taubiis*, the tsarist administration created intra- and inter-communal tensions. In the late-imperial period, social conflicts within Balkar societies between the *taubiis* and their former serfs were more intense than interethnic tensions over land between Balkar mountaineers and Kabardians. The need to provide land to the 400 Balkar families left landless after their emancipation in 1867, and problems with the suitability of the land originally transferred to the Balkars through the 1864 border project, forced Kodzokov to make significant corrections to his original border project in an effort to solve the Balkar land question. In May 1867, Loris-Melikov issued instructions to Kodzokov based on the suggestions of Mikhail Nikolaevich. Kodzokov's Commission was to "determine the number of [Balkar] families without an allotment

²¹⁷ "1909 g. oktiabريا 29.—Vypiska iz zhurnala prisutstviia oblastnogo pravleniia Terskoi oblasti ob itogakh raboty Komissii," 129.

²¹⁸ Kudashev, 174.

after their emancipation...[and] definitively discuss the question of the establishment of borders between Kabarda and the mountaineer societies so that the area of the mountaineer societies include enough land for the allotment of landless mountaineers.”²¹⁹ The new land reform project, signed into law in December 1869, transferred for 4,000 *desiatins* (10,800 acres) of Kabardian land to landless Balkar mountaineers. Over the course of the late-imperial period, as more Balkar families lost land to the *taubiis*, the administration gradually transferred additional land, totaling about 45,000 *desiatins* (121,500 acres), in the Kabardian foothills and near the trans-Malka pastures to the Balkars. Thousands of Balkars resettled to seven new villages located on this land beyond the Balkars’ 1864 borders: Kashkatau, Gundelen, Chizhok-Kabak (Nizhnii Chegem), Khabaz, Shaugen-Kabak-Bashi (Ianikoi), Nalchik-Bashi (Belaia Rechka), and Khasan’ia.²²⁰ As a steady stream of settlers flowed out of the mountain valleys of Balkaria, these new resettler villages on the foothills quickly became the most heavily populated Balkar villages.²²¹ These resettlements expanded the territory of Balkar settlement, further intensified Kabardino-Balkar relations, and more closely entwined the political-administrative futures of the two peoples.

²¹⁹ “Otchet o deiatel’nosti Komissii po razboru lichnykh i pozemel’nykh prav,” 181-82.

²²⁰ Kuz’minov, “Agrarnye preobrazovaniia u narodov Tsentral’nogo Kavkaza,” 58-59; “Doklad upravliaiushchego Terskoiu oblastnoi zhertezhoiu; 19 iulia 1907 g. No. 1297, g. Vladikavkaz,” in *Territorii i rasselenie*, 178-90; Babich and Stepanov, 36-42; K. F. Dзамikhov et al. “Etnoterritorial’naia i administrativno-territorial’naia struktura Kabardino-Balkarii v XVIII.XX vv.” in *Vymysel i istina*, 337-38.

²²¹ Babich and Stepanov, 36-42.

The Abramov Commission

During the last years of the tsarist state, the administration attempted to solve the land question in Kabarda's five mountaineer societies. On April 18, 1906, the Caucasus Viceroy, Count Illarion Vorontsov-Dashkov, established a commission for the drafting of land-reform projects for the population of the mountain zone of Terek Oblast and Karachai of Kuban Oblast under the chairmanship of State Counselor I.G. Abramov. Viceroy Vorontsov-Dashkov created the Abramov Commission in response to the empire-wide peasant rebellions during the Revolution of 1905 and, in particular, local spontaneous land seizures by landless mountaineers.²²² In the 1860s, the Kodzokov Commission, by orders of the tsarist administration which, limited its work to land reform in the plains regions of the Terek Oblast and the delimitation of borders between communities on the plains and in the mountains. This limitation was a product of the tsarist administration's relative lack of interest in the mountain zone, especially from an economic standpoint, and the perception that the land reforms in the mountain zone would be too time consuming because of the difficulties of surveying mountain lands and would thus delay the more urgent land reforms in the plains. Other than *de facto* recognition of private landownership, the tsarist administration did not conduct land reforms in the mountain zone. No official survey of the land and borders of allotments in the mountains had ever been conducted, few Balkars had deeds to their land, and land relations were regulated by oral traditions and customary law. After years of brewing land tensions in the mountains, particularly since the 1860s, during which the number of

²²²N.P. Gritsenko, "O deiatel'nosti Abramovskoi komissii," *Izvestiia: Stat'i i materialy po istorii Checheno-Ingushetii* 6 no. 1 (1965): 129-71.

landless mountaineers steadily increased as a result of demographic increases and the terms of the peasant reforms, the Abramov Commission was the tsarist administration's first and only attempt to fully solve the land question in the mountain zone.

The Abramov Commission was to conduct "a detailed study of the types of landownership and land-use existing in the mountain zone of Terek Oblast and among the Karachai of Kuban Oblast..., catalogue existing land disputes in these places...and examine the extent to which the population is supplied with land." Next, "based on the results of these studies," the Commission was to "draft projects on a) the [land] rights that should be recognized for village societies, individual members of these societies, and private individuals...b) which of the existing and potential [land] conflicts...are to be adjudicated in common courts and which belong to the jurisdiction of the Oblast administration...and c) the principles for the conducting of land reforms that will provide the population with land and for the formal delimitation of all land allotments..."²²³

Between 1906 and 1907, the Abramov Commission, with its staff of land surveyors and land experts, visited every aul in the mountains of Terek Oblast and Karachai and conducted the most complete study of land-use, landownership and the socio-economic conditions in the region to date.²²⁴ In 1908, the Abramov Commission published its findings and recommendations for land-reform as *The Works of the Commission for the*

²²³ "1906 g. aprelia 18.—Prikaz glavnokomanduiushchego voiskami Kavkazskogo voennogo okruga Vorontsova-Dashkova ob obrazovanii Komissii pod redsedatel'stvom Abramova dlia resheniia voprosa o zemleustroistve naseleniia Nagornoj polosy Terskoi oblasti i karachaevskogo plemeni Kubanskoi oblasti," in *Dokumenty po istorii Balkarii; konets XIX-nachalo XX v.*, 116-17.

²²⁴ Gritsenko, 171.

*Examination of the Current Condition of Land-use and Landownership in the Mountain Zone of Terek Oblast.*²²⁵

The Abramov Commission report revealed the great extent of land shortages, based on land quality and quantity, in the mountain zone and highlighted the particularly grim situation among the Balkars. With 0.2 desiatins (about half an acre) of arable land per person, the Balkars had the smallest amount of farmland of all the mountaineer communities examined by the Commission (Karachai, Balkars, mountain Ossetians, Ingush, Chechens, and the mainly Avar and Kumyk population of Salatavia).²²⁶ The publication of the report marked the beginning of long and heated debate, between representatives of the burgeoning national intelligentsias of the mountaineer peoples and the tsarist administration, over the merits of the Abramov Commission's land-reform project.²²⁷

The majority opinion within the Abramov Commission held that the land in the mountains had originally been communal and that "neither historical data, nor juridical conclusions, nor customary legal norms..., nor government programs provide any data that would allow for the legal recognition of the Taubiis' [historic] property rights."²²⁸ The majority opinion thus held that since "the Taubiis, in comparison with all higher estates of Terek oblasts, were given unnecessarily large compensation" during the peasant reforms, the people living in the five mountaineers societies should receive the

²²⁵ *Trudy komissii po issledovaniu sovremennogo polozheniia zemlepol'zovaniia i zemlevladieniia v nagornoj polose Terskoi oblasti* (Vladikavkaz: n/d, 1908).

²²⁶ Gritsenko, 172.

²²⁷ Kudashev, 175-77.

²²⁸ "1909 g. oktiabria 29.—Vypiska iz zhurnala prisustviia oblastnogo pravleniia Terskoi oblasti o itogakh raboty Komissii po zemleustroistovu naseleniia Nagornoj polosy," 128.

land for their permanent communal use.²²⁹ This would ensure an equalization of land-use in the mountains and guarantee state control of valuable minerals and other natural resources that were then being discovered in the mountains. Like the approach of the Kodzokov Commission forty years earlier, that of the majority within the Abramov Commission had little grounding in the realities of land relations as they then existed. The minority opinion held that since the mountaineers enjoyed private property rights and can freely buy and sell land, this existing situation should be recognized by Russian law.²³⁰

Despite having the advantage within the Commission, the majority's land-reform project—one that would have help to stem the tide of landless mountaineers moving to the foothills by equalizing land tenure—did not receive the approval of Viceroy Vorontsov-Dashkov. The Abramov Commission's project did not come to fruition for two reasons. First, mountaineer landowners, especially the Balkar *taubiis* led by Basiat Shakhanov, vociferously protested the project's calls for the expropriation and communalization of all land in the mountains. In November 1908, 490 Balkar landowners submitted their objections in a report to the Abramov Commission.²³¹ Stating that “none of the land in the mountaineer societies can be considered state land,”²³² the Balkars cited numerous historical precedents where the tsarist state recognized landownership rights in Balkaria. Second, the project of the majority within the Abramov Commission did not accord with the government's general agrarian policies, especially those of Prime

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Kudashev, 175-77.

²³¹ Muratova, 305-07.

²³² Quoted in *ibid.*, 306.

Minister Petr Stolypin.²³³ In the wake of the Revolution of 1905, the tsarist state adopted a policy of respecting private property rights, fostering the development of a class of peasant smallholders, and weakening the peasant commune. The mountaineer landowners used the laws of the empire for their benefit. As the Balkar objections pointed out, “the general spirit of the Commission’s ‘projects’ goes against the agricultural policy that the Russian government took up with the publication of the Ukaz of November 9, 1906.”²³⁴ Several revisions of the Abramov Commission’s project, reflecting a compromise between the majority and minority positions, slowly made their way through the tsarist bureaucracy. However, the voluntary dissolution of the State Duma after the outbreak of World War One prevented the signing of land-reform legislation for the mountaineers of the North Caucasus.²³⁵ The lingering problems of land relations in the North Caucasus—disparities in access to land between native peasants and *inogorodnie* settlers, on the one hand, and native elites and Cossacks on the other—would explode into open violence during the Russian Revolution and Civil War.

The land reforms and ethno-demographic changes taking place in Kabarda and the five mountaineer societies during the late-imperial period strengthened Kabardino-Balkar social, economic, and administrative-territorial ties. The post-reform period witnessed the emergence of numerous Balkar exclaves inside Kabarda. The interspersed nature of Balkar and Kabardian territories, in addition to the continued—and now legally

²³³ Z.Zh. Glasheva, “Proekt Abramovskoi komissii po razresheniu zemel’nogo voprosa v Balkarii,” *Trudy molodykh uchenykh Vladikavkazskogo nauchnogo tsentra RAN* no. 4 (2010):147-50.

²³⁴ Muratova, 307.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 307-08.

enshrined—shared use of pastures among Kabardians and Balkars, would make future ethno-national border delimitation an especially difficult task and create the preconditions for the continued coexistence of both communities within a shared administrative unit. During the last decades of tsarist rule, the development of the town of Nalchik as an economic center for both Kabardians and Balkars, and the construction in 1894 of a cart road from the Balkar society's Cherek valley to Nalchik,²³⁶ only strengthened symbiotic economic links between Kabardians and Balkars.²³⁷ As the Abramov Commission's report made clear, the Balkars depended on outside sources of grain for their survival. In all five mountaineer societies, only eleven families had enough farmland to be economically self-sufficient. Balkars travelled to Nalchik to purchase from Kabardians the grain necessary for their survival. The Balkars, however, did have, by far, the greatest number of cattle per capita of all communities in the North Caucasus.²³⁸ Kabardians travelled to Nalchik, along far less treacherous roads, to purchase meat, dairy, wool and other products from the Balkars.

²³⁶ This road, straddling steep cliffs and featuring tunnels, was a major feat of engineering for the time. Special taxes collected from members of the Balkar society funded the project. See B.B. Temukuev, *Balkarskaia obshchestvennaia kolesnaia doroga* (Nalchik: Izd-vo M. i V. Kotliarovykh, 2008).

²³⁷ In addition to Nalchik, the other major center for the Balkar cattle trade was across the mountains in the Georgian provinces of Racha and Svaneti. See Tul'chinskii, 188-90.

²³⁸ Kudashev, 172.

Khasaut: An Anomaly on the Mountain Pastures

In 1865, during the enlargement of Kabarda's auls, Kodzokov's Estate-Land Commission decreed the formation of a mixed Karachai-Balkar-Kabardian aul on the river Khasaut.²³⁹

The formation of a mixed Kabardian-Karachai-Balkar aul, Khasaut, on the edges of Kabarda's summer trans-Malka mountain pastures, reflects the long history of inter-communal ties that characterized social life in the central Caucasus. It demonstrates that estate or class ties were often far more salient than ethnic status in the everyday lives of mountaineers and Kabardians. Khasaut, because its situation had little to do with ethnicity, also demonstrates the importance of location to empire—it often mattered more where one lived than who one was in terms of culture, language, religion, or estate. Khasaut's smaller and poorer land allotment when compared with neighboring Kabardian auls created tensions during the late-imperial period. These tensions were more between Khasaut residents and the administration of Nalchik District rather than with their Kabardian neighbors. More importantly, there was no reason for the Karachai shepherds of Khasaut to believe that because they were Karachai they would be better off living with the rest of their Karachai brethren in Kuban Oblast.

The mountains of the upper-Malka river basin, forming Kabarda's historic western frontier with the Karachai and Abaza, is an area only suitable for summer cattle pasturing and horse-breeding. This region's high elevation—the lowest elevation being 9,000 feet—rugged terrain and harsh climatic conditions (it is prone to high winds, fog,

²³⁹ A.M. Bashiev, "K isotrii obrazovaniia karachaevskogo aula Khasaut," in *Materialy mezhdunarodnoi iubileinoi konferentsii "Rossiia i Kavkaz": posviashchennoi 235-letiiu prisoedineniia Osetii k Rossii*, ed. Z.V. Kanukova (Vladikavkaz: IPO SOIGSI, 2010), 44-45.

blizzards, and generally long winters) make this land nearly useless for eight months of the year.²⁴⁰ Despite these conditions, a variety of indigenous communities (Abaza, Karachai, Kabardians, and Balkars) have historically inhabited the upper Malka basin, albeit sporadically and sparsely. Usually, communities moved here out of necessity, for example, to escape conflict with neighboring societies or political conflict within their native society. By the eve of the land reforms in the mid-nineteenth century, the mountain pastures were home to five scattered homesteads with a total of about 100 households (between 500 and 600 residents) located on the Malka tributaries Lakhran, Khasaut, Kichmalka, and Gundelen. The majority of these households settled the upper Malka basin around 1855 when two noble families the Zheshtievs (Kabardian high nobles) and the Chipchikovs (Karachai nobles or *chanki*) fled Karachai during an anti-Russian uprising there led Muhammad Amin, Imam Shamil's *naib* in northwestern Caucasia.²⁴¹

The Zhereshtievs of Khasaut illustrate the inter-communal ties that held together central Caucasia's nobility. In Greater Kabarda's feudal hierarchy, the Zhereshtievs were noble vassals (*uorks*) of the Kasaev princes. Before fleeing across the Kuban to the Karachai and western Circassians during the Russian conquest, the Kasaevs were one of the most powerful princely families of eighteenth-century Kabarda. Between 1764 and 1780, a need for plains pastures forced the Balkars of the Khulam Society to come under the protection of the Kasaev princes. This relationship involved the Khulam Balkars giving the Kasaevs one sheep per household annually in exchange for the right to use pastures on the plains and to receive protection from Kabardian raids. To ensure this

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 46.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 42-43.

tributary relationship, the Kasaev princes assigned their Zhereshtiev vassals to the Khulam society, placing a Zhereshtiev residence near the Khulam valley. Living among the Khulam Balkars, the Zhereshtievs intermarried with the local Balkar nobility.²⁴² During Kabarda's last major anti-Russian rebellion, in 1822, Ermolov accused the Zhereshtievs of "collaboration with unpacified mountaineers." In the wake of this accusation, Aslan Zhereshtiev fled with his family and serfs (both Kabardians and Balkars) to the unconquered lands across the Kuban to live among his Karachai wife's relatives. In 1828, when the Karachai took oaths of subjecthood to the Tsar and submitted to Russian rule, so too did the Zhereshtievs. The Kabardian Zhereshtievs lived peacefully among the Karachai for three decades. However, in 1855, when Muhammad Amin, Imam Shamil's emissary in the northwest Caucasus, raised the Karachai to rebellion, the Zhereshtievs—Aslan's son Bekmurza and grandsons Zhenus, Iusup, and Magomet—remained loyal to Russia and requested permission to move back to Kabarda. Having forfeited their feudal holdings in Kabarda when they fled across the Kuban, the Zhereshtievs had to settle on vacant land in the mountains of the upper-Malka basin.²⁴³ The three Zhereshtiev sons each lived with their serfs on their own auls. A number of free Karachai joined the Zhereshtievs on their auls. Finally, the Karachai noble, Kurgoko Chipchikov, joined the Zhereshtievs, with whom he was related through marriage, and settled his aul nearby on the Lakhran River.²⁴⁴ In addition to the Zhereshtiev and

²⁴² R.K. Karmov, "Rod kabardinskikh uorkov Zhereshtievykh," *Arkhiv i Obshchestvo* no. 8 (2009): 98-101.

²⁴³ Safarbi Beituganov, *Kabardinskie familii: Istoki i sud'by* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1990), 36-37.

²⁴⁴ A.M. Bashiev, "Rod Chipchikovykh v Karachae (na Khasaute)," *Genealogiia narodov Severnogo Kavkaza: Traditsii i sovremennost'* no. 2 (2010): 66-77.

Chipchikov auls, an isolated Karachai aul was located on the river Urdu.²⁴⁵ At the time of the land reforms, the upper-Malka region had a Karachai majority and Kabardian and Balkar minorities.²⁴⁶

But, at least at this point, the ethnicity of the residents of these upper-Malka mountain auls was not important in their everyday lives. Rather, class or estate categories were far more salient. The culturally and linguistically diverse nobility lorded over an equally diverse peasantry. Whatever an individual's background or ancestry, he or (perhaps less often) she was likely bilingual in both the Karachai-Balkar and Kabardian languages. This region was already a zone of heightened inter-communal contact. During the summer months, Kabardians, Balkar, and Karachai shepherds lived together on the pastures with their herds and flocks. Residents of these upper-Malka villages retained and continued to develop connections (usually familial) with Greater Kabarda, Karachai, and the Balkar societies.²⁴⁷

In the 1860s, two factors led the tsarist administration to resettle these scattered auls onto one aul on the Khasaut River: the program of aul enlargement in Kabarda and the impending delimitation and distribution of Kabarda's mountain pastures among the Kabardian and Balkar auls.²⁴⁸ First, as discussed above, Kodzokov's Commission pursued a policy of aul enlargement in Kabarda, whereby it combined small auls to form larger ones. The administration conducted this enlargement of auls for purposes of

²⁴⁵ Bashiev, "K isotrii obrazovaniia karachaevskogo aula Khasaut," 41.

²⁴⁶ Accounts of the settlement of the upper-Malka region with Karachai are also found in petitions from Khasaut residents to the Soviet government during the border conflict between Karachai and Kabarda in the early 1920s. These accounts confirm the documentary history. See Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) 5677/3/315 (1922): 2-5.

²⁴⁷ Barazbiev, *Etnokul'turnye svyazi balkartsev i karachaevtsev s narodami Kavkaza*, 19-21.

²⁴⁸ Bashiev, "K isotrii obrazovaniia karachaevskogo aula Khasaut," 41-46.

administrative ease, enhanced policing and surveillance, and intensifying colonization and economic exploitation. Second, before it could delimit borders and parcel out pasture allotments to Kabardian and Balkar villages, Kodzokov wanted to rid the mountain pastures of all permanent settlements. While the trans-Malka pastures were always an area of sparse settlement, Kodzokov envisaged a neat delimitation between the pastures, as a zone of seasonal residence for shepherds, and the plains as a zone of permanent residence. In choosing a place for the new aul, the Kodzokov Commission's main goal was to ensure that "that the aul would not be an impediment [to shepherds] on the summer pastures."²⁴⁹

In 1865, the Estate-Land Commission ordered the residents of Urdy, and the Zhereshtiev and Chipchikov auls to either form one aul in the upper-Malka area or return to their "home societies" [i.e. to Karachai and the five mountaineer societies].²⁵⁰ In April 1865, Kodzokov traveled to the upper-Malka to resolve the question of these scattered auls on the Kabardian mountain pastures. On April 30, Kodzokov reported to the Head of the Kabardian District on his efforts:

In order to satisfactorily resolve this question I called a meeting on the Kichmalka with Sheremet'evs [e.g. Zhereshtievs], Shipshikovs and others living along the Khasaut, Lakhran, Urdy and Malka. I told them that they should agree a place in the mountainous part of the Kabardian land, corresponding to their economic habits of stockbreeding, where their scattered auls and homesteads can be combined to form one common aul, as is necessary in Kabarda for ease of administration and general economic interests.; if they do not wish to do this, I told them that they could...return to their own societies, because a majority of these residents are Mountaineers [e.g. Balkars] and Karachai. I gave them a week to choose a place, but as was to be expected, they could not agree on a place.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 45.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ Quoted in *ibid.*

In view of this lack of agreement on the best location for the new aul, Kodzokov took upon himself to find one. Kodzokov decided upon the Khasaut valley “where there had historically been a large and thriving population and where timber can be obtain nearby.” Most importantly for Kodzokov’s land-reform plans was the fact that “this location does not have a single Kabardian aul and does not interfere with the use of the summer pastures.”²⁵² Loris-Melikov quickly approved the choice of Khasaut. Between 1865 and 1867 residents of the scattered auls of the mountain pastures resettled to Khasaut. By 1868, 38 households resided in Khasaut. The aul of Zhenus Zhereshtiev, the highest settlement directly on the upper-Malka river, managed to avoid resettlement. In 1885, when landless Balkars formed the aul of Khabaz near this location, Zhenus Zhereshtiev’s aul merged with it. Other residents of the Zhereshtiev auls not wishing to resettle to Khasaut settled in Karmovo, the closest Kabardian aul, eventually forming a separate Zhereshtiev quarter.²⁵³

According to its 1867 project on the delimitation of Kabarda and the five mountaineer societies, approved as part of the land-reform package in 1869, the Kodzokov Commission envisaged settling Khasaut with between 100 and 125 of the 400 landless Balkar families.²⁵⁴ This plan proved unrealizable. Most landless Balkars, considering Khasaut’s location equally inhospitable to the mountain valleys of their native societies, elected to resettle to the new villages of Kashkatau and Gundelen that were being established on the 4,000 desiatins of foothills land transferred from Kabarda.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Beituganov, *Kabardinskie familiii*, 38-40.

²⁵⁴ “O raspredelenii zemel’ Bol’shoi Kabardy,” 148.

In the wake of the reforms, only eight Balkar families resettled to Khasaut. By 1879, there were 58 households officially registered in Khasaut: fifty households of original settlers from Urdu and the Zhereshtiev and Chipchikov auls, and eight formerly landless Balkar families. The smaller-than-hoped-for number of settlers put the local administration in a difficult position in terms of distributing Kabarda's communal pastures. According to the 1869 land-reform legislation, in anticipation of the resettlement of about 70 household, the Khasaut allotment included 10,359 desiatins (27,969 acres) for 108 auls.²⁵⁵

In the process of implementing the 1869 land-reform legislation in the early 1870s the Terek Oblast administration noticed a number of demographic changes and general inaccuracies and oversights in the reform legislation that necessitated substantial revisions. In particular, tsarist officials noted that Khasaut received an allotment of more than double its needs, according to household allotment norms. In 1885, the Oblast administration revised Khasaut's allotment to 5,568 desiatins for the 58 households registered in the aul in the early 1870s. The residents of Khasaut protested this change. Moreover, from the 1880s on, the population of Khasaut grew slowly but steadily. In the mid-1880s, Commander-in-Chief in the Caucasus, Prince Alexander Dondukov-Korsakov, allowed 15 landless Karachai families to settle in Khasaut and, as land ran out in the new Balkar villages, Balkars began to settle Khasaut in greater numbers. Given the increasing population of Khasaut and the need to settle more landless Balkar and Karachai families, in 1891, the General Staff reversed the Oblast's decision to revise

²⁵⁵ Gaibov, 49-50.

down Khasaut's allotment. In 1898, the Terek Oblast administration approved a new allotment for Khasaut that included 9,170 desiatins (24,759 acres) for 131 households.²⁵⁶

By the end of the tsarist period, Khasaut had grown from a small cluster of homesteads to large village, despite its isolated location and inhospitable terrain. In 1907, Khasaut had about 200 households.²⁵⁷ According to a 1914 census of Nalchik District (Kabarda's administrative unit from 1871-1917), the population of Khasaut stood at 1,739.²⁵⁸ Indeed, with its large madrasa, Khasaut had become a local center for education for Karachai and Balkars.²⁵⁹

Available sources do not indicate that the fact that Khasaut was a majority Karachai aul included within the administrative jurisdiction of Kabarda was a major concern for the aul's residents. Judging by the frequent appeals of the Khasaut residents to the Nalchik District administration to have the size of their allotment increased, the main concern for the residents of Khasaut was land.²⁶⁰ Ethnicity per se had little to do with the Khasautites' insufficient land allotment. Rather, their lack of luck had more to do with the peculiar history of the formation of Khasaut—a product of the political upheavals of the Caucasians Wars, the cross-communal class ties of mountaineer elites,

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 50-51.

²⁵⁷ "1907 g. i iunia 30.—Predpisanie Terskogo oblastnogo pravleniia nachal'niku Nalchikskogo okruga ob otdache I. Grigor'evu i T. Sharkovu v arendnoe sodержanie mineral'nykh istochnikov, nakhodiashchikhsia v selenii Khasaut," in *Dokumenty po istorii Balkarii; konets XIX-nachalo XX v.* (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1962), 46.

²⁵⁸ "Spisok naselennykh mest Nalchikskogo okruga Terskoi oblasti; 30 i iunia 1914 goda," in *Administrativno-Territorial'nye preobrazovaniia*, 54.

²⁵⁹ "Predstavlenie inspektora narodnykh uchilishch Batalpashinskogo paiona G.S. Medenika popechitel'iu Kavkazskogo uchebnogo okruga N.A. Rudl'fu o tselesoobraznosti v aul'nykh shkolakh izuchat' rodnoi iazyk," in *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe, politicheskoe i kul'turnoe razvitie narodov Karachaevo-Cherkessii (1790-1917)* eds. V.P. Nevskaiia, I.M. Shamanov, S.P. Nesmachnaia, comps. P.A. Shatskii and S.P. Skatskaia (Roston-na-Donu: Izdatel'stvo Rostovskogo universiteta, 1985), 239.

²⁶⁰ Gaibov, 49-53.

and Kodzokov's desire to remove all permanent villages from the summer pastures. Those in charge of administering Karachai, Kabarda, and the rest of the North Caucasus were almost invariably not members of the local indigenous population and their loyalties were to empire and its goals. In the tsarist period, the formation of ethnically-defined administrative borders, while certainly reifying ethnic categories and providing a blueprint for future ethno-national delimitations, did relatively little (compared with the Soviet era) for the instrumentalization of ethnicity. There were few, if any, material benefits—for example, in terms of access to land or education and career opportunities—to be gained by a Karachai if he or she lived under the same administration jurisdiction as the rest of his or her co-ethnics as opposed to Kabardian jurisdiction. Far from being a problem, the Karachai of Khasaut could derive just as many, if not more, benefits from their current administrative situation. Unlike the rest of the Karachai who lost their access to Kabarda's summer pastures in 1859 with the creation of Kuban and Terek Oblasts, the Karachai of Khasaut, as residents of Nalchik District of Terek Oblast, retained access to a share, however inadequate, of these pastures.

Ossetian Migration to Kabarda and the Village of Lesken

During the peasant reforms in the North Caucasus hundreds of landless Ossetian households, and often entire auls, voluntarily packed up their belongings and resettled from the desolate mountains of Digora (northwest Ossetia) to live among their Kabardian neighbors in the foothills and plains to the north. In a reflection of the relative indifference to ethnic ties among mountaineers, the existence Ossetian auls outside of

their “native” districts, much like the case of Khasaut, was not a particular problem for the residents of these auls. Many of these resettlers began their flight from the mountains long before the peasant reforms. The first stops for many Ossetian resettlers were the auls of the Kubatiev, Tuganov, and Kabanov Ossetian noble families, established on Kabardian lands many decades earlier.²⁶¹ However, after the land reforms on the Ossetian plains, the communal aul lands there were insufficient to provide all of the resident households with a minimum allotment. The Terek Oblast administration resettled some of these landless Ossetians to lands in Kuban Oblast that had been freed up with the mass exodus of Circassians to the Ottoman Empire at the end of the Caucasian Wars.²⁶² Most of these landless Ossetians, however, resettled in villages and worked lands then belonging to two high-noble Kabardian families (*uzendy pervoi stepeni/tlekotlesh*), the Anzorovs and the Kogolkins. In the last decades of the nineteenth century about 400 Ossetian families purchased or rented land in Kabarda.²⁶³ In particular, 40 households of Ossetians from the Lezgor society (Digora), resettled from the aul Kabanovo, which had been completely dissolved during the land reforms,²⁶⁴ to the aul of Kaisyn Anzorov on the Lesken River.²⁶⁵ When Ossetians resettled from Digora on the scale of one or several households, these households usually dispersed among Kabardian households, ultimately leading to assimilation and the loss of their distinct Ossetian culture and language.

²⁶¹ Berozov, 39.

²⁶² Ibid., 145-54.

²⁶³ Marzoev, 102.

²⁶⁴ While the other auls that Ossetian nobles had formed on Kabardian lands were deemed to have become Ossetian land by right of sale, the Kabanovo aul, which had a mixed Digora-Ossetian and Balkar population, was considered to be located on lands that were still within Kabardian territory. The resettlement of Kabanovo should be viewed as part of the larger aul enlargement program of the time. On the resettlement of Kabanovo aul see Beituganov, *Kabarda: istoriia i familii*, 59-67.

²⁶⁵ Gaibov, 133.

However, when entire auls relocated, the villagers continued to live together compactly, forming distinct quarters (*kvartaly*) in their new villages, facilitating the retention of their separate identity. For example, in the Ossetian settlers in Kaisyn-Anzorovo (Staryi Lesken/Anzorei) formed the Kabanov Ossetian Quarter.²⁶⁶

Two factors motivated this wave of resettlement: land and religion. First, the enduring land problems of the Digoran peasantry became more acute after land reforms in Ossetia (1856-63) transferred most of Digora's scarce arable land and pasturage to the local nobility (*badiliat*). In order to quell intense conflict between Ossetian serfs and nobles, the wartime administration conducted land reforms here in an *ad hoc* manner before the Kodzokov Commission's work on the plains.²⁶⁷ Later, the Kodzokov Commission's communalization of Ossetian aul land on the plains further exacerbated the situation by not providing auls with enough land to meet the needs of all their residents. Tsarist colonial administrators, hoping to solve the land problem for the Ossetians of Digoria and transform formerly restive mountaineer peoples into peaceful agriculturalists, facilitated the resettlement of landless Digorans (and other mountaineers) onto the plains of Kabarda, just north of the mountain zone. Given the Kabardians' relatively large land allotments, as we have seen in the case of the five mountaineer societies, regional colonial administrators hoped that the lands of Kabarda could be used as part of the solution to neighboring Ossetians' landlessness.²⁶⁸ Second, the division and resettlement of religiously mixed Ossetian villages along confessional lines accompanied

²⁶⁶ Mesiat, 12-13.

²⁶⁷ Kuz'minov, "Materialy soslovno-pozemel'nykh komissii," 126-33.

²⁶⁸ Idem, "Agrarnye preobrazovaniia," 51-53.

peasant reforms and resettlement in Ossetia; Digora's Orthodox Christians resettled onto Christian villages, while Digora's Sunni Muslims resettled together into Islamic village societies.²⁶⁹ In terms of religion, three factors ultimately directed some of the outmigration of Muslims from highland Digoria toward Islamic Kabarda: the tsarist state's use of confession as a means of administering its empire,²⁷⁰ the desire of Digora's Muslims to live among their brothers in faith (thereby escaping the activity of Orthodox missionary societies);²⁷¹ and the relative amenability of Kabardians toward absorbing refugees who were fellow Muslims into their villages.²⁷²

It was under these conditions of territorial transformations and ethno-demographic change in the North Caucasus, that a group of four extended Muslim families from the Digoran village of Lezgor, the Khaevs, formed a permanent settlement, Khaevo (Lesken), along the upper reaches of the river Lesken in 1878. The Khaevs originally settled in the Kabardian aul of Kogolkino along with numerous other Ossetian settler-families in 1866.²⁷³ After renting land belonging to a branch of the Kabardian Anzorov noble family, the four Khaev families obtained ownership of 432 acres of farmland and pasturage along the river Lesken, using credit to purchase a portion of the 29,182 acres recently transferred to the ownership of the Anzorov and Kogolkin nobles. The Khaevs and other Ossetian settlers who joined them in their new aul gradually purchased more land from surrounding Kabardian nobles over the course of the late

²⁶⁹ Berozov, 127-38.

²⁷⁰ Arapov et al., 101-06, 262-67; Khodarkovsky, "Of Christianity, Enlightenment, and Colonialism," 394-430.

²⁷¹ On Russian missionary activity among Ossetians see Mostashari, 231-236, 238 and Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*, 42-45, 54.

²⁷² On the role of Islam in Kabardino-Ossetian relations see Marzoev, 104-20

²⁷³ Beituganov, *Kabarda: istoriia i familii*, 71.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁷⁴ This new settlement of Khaevo fell within the local jurisdiction of the Kaisyn-Anzorovo village society of Kabarda, ensuring close economic, political, and familial ties with neighboring Kabardians throughout the late-imperial period.²⁷⁵

During the last decades of tsarist rule and through the revolution and civil-war years, Khaevo, or the village of Lesken as it was known from 1893 on, experienced several waves of further Ossetian immigration from Digoria. As Lesken grew, newcomers to the village settled in compact groupings according to their ancestral Digoran village.²⁷⁶ Over time the quality and quantity land allotted to new settlers steadily diminished. In terms of land supplies and general socio-economic conditions, Lesken was one of the poorest auls in the foothills. Most residents were subsistence agriculturalists and did not own cattle. Only the original Khaev settlers had access to Kabarda's communal pastures.²⁷⁷ By 1917 many Leskenites were virtually landless and had to resort to renting land from wealthier villagers and neighboring Kabardian nobles.²⁷⁸ This socio-economic polarization within the village of Lesken matches a general pattern also found within most Kabardian villages in the late imperial period. As the tsarist military administration dissolved smaller Kabardian villages and relocated their populations onto enlarged villages, newcomers formed distinct quarters that retaining the name and identity of their village of origin. These inter-village divisions persisted for

²⁷⁴ Berozov, 167-68.

²⁷⁵ The Ossetian, Vladikavkaz Okrug, had jurisdiction over Lesken's educational and military affairs.

²⁷⁶ A. Besolv, "K 130-letiiu seleniia Lesken." *Severnaia Ossetiia: respublikanskaia ezhednevnaia gazeta*. 5 February 2009; A. B. Mamkhegov, "Dva epizoda iz pereseleniia osetin v Kabardu," *Arkhiv i obshchestvo* no. 7 (2008): 65-72.

²⁷⁷ Gaibov, 44.

²⁷⁸ RGASPI 65/1/110 (1923): 90

generations. Constant feuds over the division of village land allotments only sharpened these divisions within the village. During regular division of village allotments, one or several quarters within the village, often those forming the original core of the village, would band together to dominate the village assembly to ensure that their quarters received the best land.²⁷⁹ Sources indicate that this type of socio-economic polarization was especially pronounced in Lesken largely because the village itself straddles the boundary between plains and foothills. By 1917 the village divided into two mutually hostile quarters. The lower quarter formed from the village's original Khaevo core and its members worked the village's arable land to north. The upper quarter, consisting of more recent arrivals, received mountainous land of much lesser quality to the south. In this way Lesken represented a microcosm of the land-based socio-economic divisions of the late-imperial North Caucasus.²⁸⁰

Inter-Communal Relations and Slavic Peasant Migration to Kabarda in Post-Reform Russia

By the 1880s Kabarda was experiencing a new wave of colonization that would last through World War One. These colonizers were primarily Eastern Slavs (Ukrainians and Russians) and, to a less extent, Germans. The conclusion of the peasant reforms and the attendant delimitation and redistribution of Kabarda's lands (in the 1860s and 70s), the

²⁷⁹ Mesiahs, 12-13.

²⁸⁰ GARF 1235/140/190 (1925): 45

construction of the Rostov-Vladikavkaz railway, and the easing of restrictions on resettlement cleared the way for intensified migration to the region.²⁸¹

In addition to the historic (though much-decreased) disparity in land holdings between Kabarda and its mountaineer neighbors, two other factors relegated the native peasantry to landlessness or small plots of the worst quality land: Cossack colonization of the best land on the plains and a monopoly on the limited usable land in the mountains by local nobles. With the transformation of the majority of Kabarda's land into communal village land, after their emancipation in 1867, the Kabardian peasantry came away from the land reforms (signed in 1869) relatively better off than their Ossetian, Balkar, Karachai, and Ingush neighbors. If all members of Kabardian village societies were guaranteed a share of the communal farmland and pastures, however poor quality and small in size this land may have been in comparison with that of Kabarda's private landowners, in the five (Balkar) mountaineer societies and other mountain regions the peasant reforms, which were conducted without land reforms, left hundreds landless peasant families. These landless peasants turned to renting land on the plains at high rates and working as hired laborers on the region's commercial farms or working as seasonal laborers elsewhere in the empire.²⁸²

Nevertheless, Kabardians faced internal land disparities of their own. By the 1880s, the colonial administration had awarded the Kabardian nobility, and other Kabardians who rendered significant service to the state, between two and three percent of Kabarda's population, with extensive private land holdings totaling about 17% of

²⁸¹ Tkhamokova, *Russkoe i ukrainskoe naselenie Kabardino-Balkarii*. 37.

²⁸² Troino, 37-47.

Kabarda's land.²⁸³ These private lands were equal to nearly half of Kabarda's communal aul allotments. Moreover, the nobility, still wielding substantial power in their auls by virtue of village conservatism and economics, managed to seize portions of the best communal land during the last decades of the nineteenth century and,²⁸⁴ during the first decade of the twentieth century, wealthy Kabardian horse and cattle breeders managed to assert their control over the best mountain pastures along the Zolka river.²⁸⁵ These were the more adaptable of the Kabardian nobles. Importantly, many other nobles, unable to adapt to life without free labor, quickly sold off their lands to more prosperous Kabardian elites and settlers from outside the region. Finally, non-Kabardian high-ranking tsarist officers also received large allotments in Kabarda as a reward for their service.²⁸⁶

In his 1867 protest against the allotment of private land to Kabarda's nobles, Kodzokov warned, "for every 20 private landowners, less than 15 will not immediately sell off of their land given to them in vein."²⁸⁷ In an early 1866 letter to Kabardian District Head, Aleksandr Nurid, Loris-Melikov similarly predicted that "it could easily happen that many of the landowners will rush to sell off their allotments...for a song and we, not having ensured the wellbeing of the of the upper estate as the government requires, will carry in our hands those pebbles who now loudly call themselves princes

²⁸³ Mambetov, Mambetov, *Material'naia kul'tura sel'skogo naseleniia*, 12.

²⁸⁴ D. N. Prasolov, "K voprosu zemel'nykh zakhvatakh v kabardinoskoi sel'skoi obshchine poreformennogo perioda." *Vestnik Kabardino-Balkarskogo Instituta Gumannitaynykh Issledovaniï* no. 8 (2001): 60-78

²⁸⁵ D.N. Prasolov, "Pastbishchnoe i lesnoe obshchinnoe zemlepol'zovanie v Kabarde vo 2-oi polovine 19-nachale 20 v.," in *Zemel'nye otnosheniia v Kabarde i Balkarii*. 80-89.

²⁸⁶ Kumykov, *Ekonomicheskoe i kul'turnoe razvtie*, 218.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

and nobles [*tlakotleshami*].”²⁸⁸ The prophecies of Kodzokov and Loris-Melikov came true in post-reform period. Kodzokov’s suggestion that about a quarter of the landowners would sell off their land was a gross underestimate. By 1914 about 79% of the Kabardian nobility’s lands had been sold off to settlers, Russian entrepreneurs, and the relatively small number of more successful nobles who now formed the nucleus of a burgeoning native bourgeoisie.²⁸⁹ Those who purchased these lands, whether prosperous Kabardian nobles or outside investors, most frequently rented these lands out to peasant from near and far.²⁹⁰ By the 1880s, these private lands, combined with the extensive Cossack lands, became sites of large-scale Russian and Ukrainian peasant migration.²⁹¹ This would be the first large-scale settlement of Slavic peasants to the region since the construction of the Cossack *stanitsy* and military settlements along the Georgian Military Highway in the 1830s and 1840s.

Between 1880 and 1889 the eastern Slavic population of contemporary Kabardino-Balkaria (Nalchik Okrug and seven surrounding Cossack *stanitsy*) had expanded from around 13,000 to over 20,000. The census of 1897 recorded about 30,000 Russian and Ukrainian settlers and by World War One this number had reached 54,000.²⁹² While forming several large villages—Novokonstantinovskoe (1885), Novopoltavskoe (1886), and Baksanskoe (1895)—these Russian and Ukrainian peasants

²⁸⁸ “Pis’mo nachal’nika Terskoi oblasti gen. Loris-Melikova nachal’niku Kabardinskogo okruga polkovniku Nuridu o besporiadjakh v Kabarde i o nasazhdenii chastnogo zemlevladieniia,” in *Krest’ianskaia reforma v Kabarde*, 753.

²⁸⁹ Dzagov, 38; Khubulova, 70.

²⁹⁰ Troino, 72.

²⁹¹ Mesiat, 68-69; G. M. Kashezheva, “Nekotorye voprosy pereselencheskogo dvizheniia v Terskuiu oblast’ v poreformennyi period,” in *Iz istorii feodal’noi Kabardy i Balkarii*, eds. R. Kh. Gugov and V. N. Sokurov (Nalchik: Institut istorii, filologii i ekonomiki pri Sovete ministrov KBASSR, 1981), 70.

²⁹² Tkhamokova, *Russkoe i ukrainskoe naselenie Kabardino-Balkarii*, 34-45.

usually established small homesteads (*khutora*) that combined an average of several dozen households from the same region. Settlers from provinces such as Kursk, Poltava, Chernigov, and Kharkov usually rented lands from Kabardian nobles or Cossacks, forming homesteads away from the nearest aul and on the outskirts of a *stanitsa*.²⁹³ Additionally, groups of religious dissenters also took up residence in Kabarda. Several hundred Molokans lived on a homestead rented from Prince Inaluk Anzorov in Lesser Kabarda near the aul of Astemirovo. Baptists resided in a homestead rented from the Atazhukin princes on the river Zolka in Greater Kabarda.²⁹⁴ The *narodnik* artist Mitrofan Alekhin, organizer of the Tolstoyan movement in Nalchik Okrug, established three communes in Kabarda.²⁹⁵ Nalchik, the former fortress and growing regional administrative center, attracted the single greatest number of settlers. By 1900, 3,337 Russians and Ukrainians formed 69 percent of Nalchik's population.²⁹⁶ In addition to Slavic settlers, Nalchik had sizeable populations of mountain Jews (they first settled here from Dagestan in 1847), Ossetians, and German colonists.

Intra-communal conflict was more common than inter-communal conflict in late-imperial Kabarda. In late-tsarist Kabarda, unlike in neighboring parts of the North Caucasus, tensions between the marginalized *inogorodnie* (Slavic settlers who rented land, usually from Cossacks, and lacked full residency rights) and their more powerful Cossack neighbors were a more common form of social conflict than unrest between

²⁹³ Dzagov, 38-40.

²⁹⁴ Tkhamokova, *Russkoe i ukrainskoe naselenie Kabardino-Balkarii*, 38, 41.

²⁹⁵ M. Z. Sablirov, "Zemledel'cheskaia obshchina tolstovtsev Kabardy i Balkarii," in *Istoriia Severnogo Kavkaza s drevneishikh vremen po nostoiashchee vremia (Tezisy konferentsii 30-31 maia 2000 goda)*, eds. Iu. S. Davydov et al. (Piatigorsk: Izd-vo Piatigorskogo gos. lingvisticheskogo univ, 2000), 203-05.

²⁹⁶ Dzagov, 43.

Kabardians and Slavic settlers. Rather, with wealthy Kabardian stock-breeders trying to gain private control over the best of the Kabardian communal pastures and neighboring mountaineer peoples expanding their territory to the foothills and plains of Kabarda, Kabardians were more often at odds among themselves and neighboring mountaineer peoples than with settlers from further afield.

Lesser Kabarda witnessed some of the most intensive settlement during the last decades of tsarist rule. As we have seen, Lesser Kabarda had been a site of near constant demographic transformations and cultural-linguistic mixing since the eighteenth century.

During the peasant migrations of the late-imperial period, Lesser Kabarda and the Kurp-river valley in particular, always a zone of cultural-linguistic mixing became even more heterogeneous, as migrants from near and far settled among the Lesser Kabardian auls. Settlers rented small allotments from the local nobility and the state (former Bekovich-Cherkasskii lands) and crowded onto the scarce arable land along the few rivers and streams of this drought-prone region. Neighboring Ingush and Ossetians, continuing to expand into Kabarda, though on a much smaller scale than in previous centuries, established homesteads on rented land along the right bank of the Kurp and the smaller Kuian rivulet.²⁹⁷ Meanwhile, a mix of Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, and Bulgarians established homesteads next to the Kumyks of the Bekovich-Cherkasskii aul on lands formerly belonging to these princes.²⁹⁸ Given its proximity to hot spots of Ingush-Ossetian-Cossack violence, Lesser Kabarda experienced especially high levels of

²⁹⁷ Mesiats, 86.

²⁹⁸ Tiutiunina, 66-70.

violence and raiding during the Civil War as power switched hands between reds and whites.

One of the settlers who arrived in Kabarda during the late-imperial period was Ekaterina Khomiakova, daughter of Aleksei Khomiakov, co-founder of the Slavophile movement in Russia and Dmitrii Kodzokov's godfather. Khomiakova's story is significant for several reasons. First, it illustrates the characteristics of Russian settlement in Kabarda, highlighting, in particular, the relatively amicable relations between Kabardians and Slavic settlers. Second, Khomiakova's story also illustrates the interplay and cultural connections between center and periphery so characteristic of life in the Russian Empire.

In 1881, Ekaterina Alekseeivna resettled in Kabarda, the homeland of her godfather, Dmitrii Kodzokov, the baptized Kabardian who had been so instrumental to the administration's land-reform efforts two decades earlier. Throughout a career straddling the worlds of Russian officialdom and the native Kabardian intelligentsia, Kodzokov retained close contact with the Khomiakovs.²⁹⁹ With Kodzokov's assistance, Khomiakova purchased 500 desiatins (1,350 acres) along the Zolka River from Erestan Nogmov, son of the Kabardian intellectual and educator Shora Nogmov. Upon settling in Kabarda, Ekaterina became active in educated society of Nalchik District, working closely as an educator with both Kabardian and Russian populations. In addition to using her estate to teach new agricultural practices to the surrounding peasantry, in the early 1900s Khomiakova opened a shelter for orphaned girls, a women's school, and a hospital

²⁹⁹ See Kумыков, *Dmitrii Kodzokov*.

on her estate. The Khomiakova community became one of the top cultural-educational centers of Kabarda and the Terek region more broadly. Khomiakova worked closely with some of the leading members of the Kabardian intelligentsia, helping them develop more effective agricultural practices for their estates, supporting the expansion of education for Kabardian children, and providing general philanthropic support to surrounding villages. Unlike other settler homesteads that were incorporated into Russian village societies, the Khomiakova homestead was administered as part of the Kabardian Babukovskoe village society, a testament to the close ties between Khomiakova and the neighboring Kabardian population.³⁰⁰

While certainly not typical given her elite social status, Ekaterina Khomiakova's case highlights several significant phenomena. Most importantly, while most Slavic settlers did not engage with their Kabardian neighbors with the same benevolence as Khomiakova, her case is generally indicative of the low levels of tensions that existed between Kabardians and Slavic settlers in Nalchik Okrug during the late imperial period. Second, in addition to emphasizing the multiethnic nature of tsarist officialdom, the ties between the Khomiakovs and Kodzokov and other Kabardians, also demonstrate how the relationship between native elites and Russian society was not simply a case of the periphery being pulled into the center. Rather, the relationship was more reciprocal, with both Russians and non-Russians leaving their mark on each other and their regions.

The relatively amicable relations among natives, *inogorodnie*, and Cossacks in Kabarda stand in stark contrast to the fraught relationship between these groups

³⁰⁰ Beituganov, *Kabardinskie familii*, 172-78.

elsewhere in the North Caucasus. Among Kabarda's Karachai, Ossetian, Ingush and Chechen neighbors, relations with local Cossack villages remained strained throughout the tsarist period and early years of Soviet power. These tensions between natives and Cossacks resulted from several factors: 1) military campaigns and anti-colonial resistance continued in neighboring regions decades after the pacification of Kabarda; even after the official conclusion of the Russo-Caucasian Wars in 1864, violent rebellions continued to flare up periodically in Chechnya and Ingushetia in particular; 2) unlike the Kabardians, neighboring mountaineer peoples faced extreme land shortages because, despite gaining land at the expense of a declining Kabarda in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this was not enough to ameliorate these people's historic landlessness, and the administration never conducted land reform in the mountain zone (which would have equalized land holdings). Moreover, these mountaineer peoples did not experience the type of depopulation witnessed in Kabarda during this period; 3) despite these land shortages and enduring land pressures, in the 1860s and 1870s the colonial administration seized much-needed land from the Chechen and Ingush for Cossack settlement as a way of defending this region from further native rebellions and integrating it into the empire; 4) these newly acquired Cossack lands along the Sunzha River remained a source of violent conflict between Terek Cossacks and Chechen and Ingush mountaineers throughout the late-imperial period; 5) finally, in the wake of the great social, economic and political upheavals caused by decades of war and, especially, the peasant reforms, destitute and declassed former nobles took to banditry and raiding (*abrechestvo*), targeting mainly Cossack *stanitsy* and settler villages.

Conclusions

At the close of tsarist rule, Viceroy Orbeliani's remark of 55 years earlier that "the question of land rights is undoubtedly of the greatest importance in the life of the people,"³⁰¹ rang more true than ever. Despite the tsarist administration's efforts to create a system of land tenure that would provide the region's inhabitants with access to land on a permanent basis, the number of landless and land-poor mountaineers had only increased in the post-reform era. As in central Russia and indeed most of the Empire, the state's approach to security, based on an ideology of rule that viewed the traditional nobility as the bulwark of the imperial order, impeded the resolution of the peasant question in the North Caucasus. This was, in other words, an approach to security and imperial integration based more on class or estate than ethnicity. The ascendancy of an approach to land reform based on the retention of large noble estates prevented an equitable redistribution of the region's land resources, left large portions of the highland population landless, and left peasants on the plains with grossly inadequate communal allotments. While Kodzokov hoped that the communalization of plains land would solve the land crisis in the region, others in the tsarist administration used this policy more as means to ease the administrative difficulties of conducting reforms and to obtain complete legal authority to dispose of land at its discretion. Not fully grasping the correlation between the land question and the security question, the administration chose an approach to the latter that exacerbated the former. By economically and politically propping up native

³⁰¹ "Otnoshenie ispolniaiushchego obiazannosti glavnokomanduiushchego Kavkazskoi armiei general-ad"iutanta kniazia G.D. Orbeliani upravliaushchemu voennym ministerstvu general-ad"iutantu D.A. Miliutinu," 176.

nobles and elites—the local equivalent of the empire’s ruling class—and neglecting the needs of the region’s peasantry, the administration further inflamed conflict within the societies of the North Caucasus.

In addition to supporting the native nobility and other elites, the administration also viewed increased Cossack and Slavic peasant settlement of the region as a means to promote security and imperial integration through russification.³⁰² The resultant increase in colonial migration to the North Caucasus—of Cossacks in the 1860s and peasants from the 1880s on—created additional land tensions in the region. The resettlement and concentration of Ingush from the Tarskaia valley into crowded auls in the Nazran District to make way for new Sunzha Cossack *stanitsy* in the 1860s created an explosive situation whereby neighboring Cossacks, Ossetians, and Ingush competed for land. These tensions would cause into some of the fiercest conflict in the region during the Russian Civil War.³⁰³ While certainly not providing any relief to the land problems in Nalchik District (Kabarda and the Balkar societies), peasant migration to the plains here did not result in open inter-communal conflict. Rather, tensions remained largely intra-communal. Slavic *inogorodnie* settlers who rented land from Cossacks demanded greater rights within local village societies; Kabardian shepherds demanded a more equitable share of their communal pastures; and Balkars called for access to farmland within their mountaineer societies. While Kabarda’s different communities periodically came into conflict with one another over the borders of their land allotments, conflicts remained sharper within

³⁰² AKAK, *Tom IX*, 429.

³⁰³ A.A. Tsutsiev, *Osetino-Ingushskii konflikt (1992-...): ego predistoriia i faktory razvitie* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998).

(rather than among) these communities. Indeed, the major incidences of peasant unrest and violence in Nalchik District—the Zolka and Cherek uprisings in 1913—saw Kabardian and Balkar peasants take up arms against their own elites. In the Zolka Uprising, poor Kabardian shepherds, with the help of exiled Bolshevik Sergei Kirov, staged an armed occupation of the Zolka pastures after the passage of a law allowing the monopolization of these supposedly communal pastures by wealthy Kabardian horse-breeders. In the Cherek Uprising, Balkar peasants fought against the seizure of the Zhankhotov communal lands by local *taubiis*.³⁰⁴

In conducting the land reforms, the Caucasus administration attempted to foster greater ethnic uniformity among the administrative-territorial units of Terek Oblast. In its reforms for Lesser Kabarda, for example, the Kodzokov Commission viewed the district's diversity—itsself a product of tsarist war-time policies of resettlement—as an inherent cause of its land tensions. These views resulted in the ethnic homogenization of Lesser Kabarda through resettlement, administrative redistricting and annexations (though the remnant of Lesser Kabarda would take on new diversity as a result of European and Russian peasant migration to the region during that last three decades of tsarist rule).

But the tsarist administration did not strictly follow the principle of ethno-territorial uniformity in its land reforms. As the examples of Khasaut and Lesken demonstrate, the existence of Karachai and Ossetian auls outside of their “native” districts was not a particular problem for the administration or the residents of these auls.

³⁰⁴ For a survey of these uprisings see I.F. Muzhev, “Kabarda i Balkariia v period reaktsii i novogo revoliutsionnogo pod’ema (1907-1914),” in *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR, T. I*, 391-97.

Residents of these villages had little to gain and, likely, more to lose moving to their co-ethnics or petitioning for the administration annexation of their auls into their “native” districts. Finally, the existence of Balkar exclaves on the Kabardian foothills, provided Balkars moved to lands designated by the state for their settlement, did not lead to serious inter-communal conflict. Rather, the Kabardino-Balkar socio-economic symbiosis continued to thrive, though in a different form. In the early 1920s, Soviet nationality policies would give new meaning to ethno-territorial borders in this region and lead to a spike of violence, usually on interethnic grounds, not seen in since the Caucasian Wars.

Chapter 4:

From Princely Fiefdoms to Soviet Nations: Border Delimitation, Inter-Communal Conflict, and National Identity, 1918-1928

During the revolutions of 1917 and their chaotic aftermath, the peoples of the North Caucasus exhibited little concern for the big political questions of the day, such as the future of Russia's political system or the possibility of their national independence. The concerns of mountaineers, Kabardians, and *inogorodnie* like those of Russia's peasantry in general, were firmly rooted in local issues of land rights and power differentials within the village. But by 1918 these local concerns had become part of the larger national struggles of Russia's multiethnic peasantry over land.¹ During the civil-war years (1918-1921) the North Caucasus witnessed some of the war's fiercest fighting, most of which, at their core, involved disputes over land. This chapter examines the land disputes and related border conflicts between Kabardians and their neighbors.

While land disputes had a long and turbulent history coming into the Soviet era, there are nevertheless important contrasts between the land question in the tsarist period and the land question after the triumph of Soviet power. In particular, the Bolsheviks' inversion of privileged social and ethnic categories changed the land dynamic in

¹On the transformation of the peasantry's struggle from local to national politics see, in particular, Aaron Rettish, *Russia's Peasants in Revolution and Civil War: Citizenship, Identity, and the Creation of the Soviet State, 1914-1922* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 74-75, *passim*.

important ways. The social leveling of 1918, culminating in the expropriation of noble landholdings and the equalization of land tenure within communities, meant that remaining social inequalities were more clearly divided along communal lines (i.e. certain cultural-linguistic communities had more land than others, rather than certain classes having more land than other classes). The coincidence of this more pronounced “ethnicization” of social structure and the Bolsheviks’ introduction of the national principle—the idea that the rights of Russia’s peoples should be secured by granting them national autonomy within their own ethno-territorial units—provided new opportunities for land-hungry communities to improve their economic situations. Therefore, in addition to helping to create national communities in places where they had not previously existed, the Bolsheviks’ delimitation of national borders provided an opportunity for mountaineer communities to use their socio-economic status, which they specifically tied to their ethnicity, to convince Soviet officials to redistribute land held by other purportedly “kulak” peoples to their new national territories.

The shift from one set of privileged categories (nobles and large landowners, especially Cossack and, to a lesser extent, Kabardian ones) to another set of privileged categories (poor peasants and especially mountaineer ones) destabilized the traditional land-society relationship. Inter-communal violence erupted partly as a result of this disruption. Indeed, the shift in relative importance from class-framed conflict to ethnically-framed conflict, and the meanings of these types of conflict, matches a contemporaneous pattern in Transcaucasia described by Ronald Suny. In Transcaucasia, “economic and political conflicts between workers and the propertied classes were much

more relevant in the years 1917 than “ethnic conflicts,” but in the years of Civil War (1918-1921), the reverse became true.”² If the presence of Russian soldiers and workers in Tbilisi and Baku ensured that conflict was framed in class terms, in Terek Oblast of the North Caucasus, it was only after the all-out assault on the ruling classes of the central Caucasus in 1918 that social contradictions between the region’s communities became more important than social contradictions within these communities.

Conflicts in the midst of the breakdown of political authority during the revolutionary years often began as land disputes between and within neighboring villages. In cases where these disputes involved culturally and linguistically distinct villages, the Bolsheviks’ introduction of the national principle and delimitation of ethno-national borders beginning in 1920, transformed and intensified these disputes into ethno-national conflicts involving two nationalities rather than two villages. I argue, as Peter Sahlin does for the early-modern Pyrenees,³ that the new connections and opportunities created through border delimitation—in this case opportunities to improve the quality and amount of land that they controlled—led individuals to identify with national communities. The border and land disputes surrounding Kabarda and its neighbors also demonstrate what Francine Hirsch calls “double assimilation”: “assimilation...into nationality categories and, simultaneously, the assimilation of those nationally categorized groups into the Soviet state.”⁴ By mastering the “ideological literacies” of class and nation, and learning how to “speak Bolshevik” and “speak national,” the

² Suny, “Nationalism and Social Class in the Russian Revolution,” 244.

³ Sahlin, 155-67

⁴ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 14.

peasants and shepherds who wrote petitions and often travelled thousands of miles to plead their cases at central party and state agencies in Moscow, embarked on a process of becoming *active* and *integrated* members of both the Soviet state their nascent national communities.⁵

During this period of revolution and conflict, the symbiotic relationship between Kabardians and Balkars nearly broke down into what would have been a protracted and violent inter-communal conflict over land and borders (but, importantly, did not). In the context of the Soviet-sponsored proliferation of national autonomies in the North Caucasus and throughout the Soviet state in the early 1920s, Balkar ethno-political elites hoped to carve out a separate ethno-territorial autonomous unit for their people. In separating from the Kabardians, the Balkar leadership hoped to secure greater land resources from their perennially land-poor mountaineer people. However, given the interconnected nature of Kabardian and Balkar land tenure and settlement patterns—an interconnectedness that late-imperial land reforms had only increased—the prospect of dividing the two peoples presaged a panoply of economic and administrative difficulties for the state and represented a threat to the Kabardians' land interests. Ultimately, the Kabardian and Balkar leaders reached a political compromise and agreed to share power and land. Here, they echoed the long-standing symbiotic relations of Balkars and Kabardians since the collapse of the Kabardian state. In 1922, this compromise resulted in the formation of Kabardino-Balkaria as a unitary ethno-territorial autonomous oblast

⁵ On "speaking Bolshevik," see Kotkin, 224-25. On speaking national see Dragostinova, "Speaking National," 157-58.

for the Kabardian and Balkar peoples in which the land resources would be the common property of the Kabardino-Balkar people—that is, all citizens of Kabardino-Balkaria.

This chapter examines these issues of inter-communal and class relations, identity formation, and Soviet nationality policies by focusing on four case studies of land and border conflicts involving Kabarda and its neighbors: the Kabardian-Ossetian conflict over the village of Lesken; the Kabardian-Karachai conflict over mountain pastures and the village of Khasaut; Kabardian-Balkar tensions over land and the prospect of the administrative separation of the two peoples into their own autonomous regions; and the confrontations between Kabarda and its neighbors over the territorial jurisdiction of (mainly Russian) settler villages along the Kurp River.

Setting the Context: Land Disputes, Border Conflicts, and Nationality in The Central Caucasus

During the Civil War years the peoples of the central Caucasus were forced to take sides in the fighting. The indigenous landed nobility entered into reluctant alliances with local Cossack armies in support of the White Army, while most of the region's poor peasantry (at least tacitly) supported Soviet power and the Red Army.⁶ The native peasants and the nobility based their decisions on which side offered the best possibility for them to gain or retain land. The Bolsheviks, realizing that their aspirational base of support, the urban proletariat, was non-existent outside of the cities of Vladikavkaz and Grozny, obtained the support of the native peasantry by promising to carry out (or recognized already

⁶ This was not the case in Dagestan; here Islamic resistance movements attracted the most support.

completed) land redistributions in their favor at the expense of the nobility and the Cossacks.⁷ In addition to receiving Cossack lands, the native mountaineer communities of the central Caucasus—Ossetians, Ingush, Karachai, and Balkars—also hoped to receive plains land from their relatively better off Kabardian neighbors. But the pro-Bolshevik mountaineer leaders could not easily depict Kabardians as anti-Bolshevik colonial oppressors as they could with the Cossacks. During the collapse and the reconfiguration of the meanings of social and ethnic categories brought on by the Russian Revolution and Soviet power, inter-communal conflict between Cossacks and mountaineers engulfed Kabardians as well.

The Bolsheviks kept their promise, carrying out immediate land reforms upon coming to power in Terek Oblast in March 1918. Importantly, in May 1918, the Bolsheviks set a precedent by sanctioning the deportation of several Cossack *stanitsy* along the Sunzha River to free up territory for landless Ingush and Ossetians.⁸ However, internal fighting and competing claims to power among pro-Soviet ethno-political (e.g. Ossetian, Ingush, Kabardian, Balkar, Cossack) blocs impeded land reform and the collapse of the Terek Soviet Republic in early 1919 halted these measures altogether. While some mountaineer peoples, such as the Chechens and Ingush, never fully submitted to White rule, the native peoples that did fall to General Anton Denikin's regime (Kabardians, Balkars, Ossetians) offered the Whites little active support and more

⁷ For a thorough discussion of the Civil War in the North Caucasus see especially the following studies by Valerii Dzidzoev: *Ot Soiuznogo obedinennikh gor'tev Severnogo Kavkaza i Dagestana do Gorskoi ASSR (1917-1924 g.g.): nachal'nyi etap natsional'no-gosudarstvennogo stroitel'stvo narodov Severnogo Kavkaza v XX veke* (Vladikavkaz: Izd-vo Severo-Osetinskogo gos. Universiteta, 2003) and *Belyi i krasnyi terror na Severnom Kavkaze v 1917-1918 godakh* (Vladikavkaz: Alaniia, 2000).

⁸ "Rezoliutsiia Chrezvychainoi komissii po zemel'nomu voprosu," in Akim Kazbekovich Dzhanayev ed. *S"ezdy narodov Tereka. Tom I* (Ordzhonikidze: Ir, 1977), 331-32.

frequently joined a growing anti-Denikin coalition of Bolshevik and Islamist forces in the mountains. By February of 1920, the Red Insurgents of the North Caucasus staged coordinated attacks coinciding with the advance of the 11th Red Army in the North Caucasus. By early March the last of the White Armies had fled the Terek region of the North Caucasus.

Once the Bolsheviks and their local supporters in the North Caucasus had reestablished Soviet power in early 1920, the land-poor mountaineer peoples (Ossetians, Ingush, Chechens, Balkars and Karachai) once again set about the daunting task of solving the land question on the bases of land socialization and equalization. This land-reform program translated into the violent expropriation of the estates of nobles and princes (most of whom subsequently emigrated or quickly perished as kulaks under Soviet rule) and the redistribution of their land among the peasantry. The peoples of Terek Oblast had already begun the process of expropriating and redistributing private land before the Whites temporarily came to power in early 1919, but in the areas under White rule, the anti-Bolshevik authorities restored the land rights of local nobilities. With the Bolshevik victory in early 1920, local Soviets quickly reinstated the land reforms of 1918. With the exception of the Kabardians, whose nobility held significant land allotments, the internal redistribution of lands was not nearly enough to solve the land hunger facing the Karachai, Balkar, Ossetian, and Ingush peoples. The native leaders of these communities—usually coming from the small stratum of semi-literate peasants and day laborers, Islamic clergymen educated in reformist madrasas in Istanbul and Cairo, and déclassé nobles—advocated two additional methods for freeing up land for their

land-starved peoples: 1) the deportation of Cossack *stanitsy* and other non-native settlers and the resettlement of landless mountaineers onto their lands—a practice the Bolsheviks had turned to before and, as Peter Holquist has shown, one they had inherited from the tsarist and pan-European “tools of wartime coercion and mobilization” but used “to pursue [their] revolutionary project”⁹; and 2) the administrative annexation of territory from Kabarda and limited resettlement of Kabardian villages.¹⁰ This latter idea was, of course, not new. However, Soviet categories of “class” and “nation” offered new opportunities for the fulfillment of irredentist claims to the territory of Kabarda.

The representatives of the central Caucasus’s mountaineer peoples (Ossetians, Ingush, Karachai, and Balkars) began their first in a long series of attempts at ameliorating their land problems at the expense of Kabarda in 1918, prior to the White occupation of the region. In March 1918, the pro-Soviet Second Congress of the Peoples of Terek Region passed the Law on the Socialization of Land, based on the Soviet principle that “every peasant regardless of nationality must have land.”¹¹ In May, the Third Congress of the Peoples of the Terek formed the Emergency Land Commission of the Terek Soviet Republic to oversee the redistribution of land in the region on the basis of “the equalization of national borders.”¹² This Land Commission was composed of pro-Soviet mountaineer elites and non-Party, tsarist-era land surveyors. In addition to the

⁹ Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 6, 205.

¹⁰ A. Kh. Karmov, “Zemel’nye otnosheniia v GASSR,” in *Zemel’nye otnosheniia v Kabarde i Balkarii*, 107-09.

¹¹ Zh. A. Kalmykov, *Etnoterritorial’naia i Administrativno-territorial’naia struktura Kabardino-Balkarii i problemy realizatsii v KBR federal’nogo zakona “ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii mestnogo samoupravleniia v Rossiiskoi federatsii* (Nalchik: Respublikanskii poligrafkombinat im. Revoliutsii 1905 g, 2010), 14.

¹² A. Karmov, 107.

deportation of the four Cossack *stanitsy* from the Sunzha region, an Emergency Land Commission proposal ratified by the Congress called for “the granting to [landless mountaineers] of lands that they had previously rented from Kabardians.” Upon surveying Nalchik District, which over the course of the late-imperial period had been generally accepted as the ethno-territorial borders of Kabarda,¹³ the Land Commission called for large swathes of this district to be redistributed among Karachai, Balkar, Ossetian and Ingush peasants. The decisions of the Emergency Land Commission caused great consternation among Kabardian Soviet leaders and during the district-level Congress of Peoples of Nalchik District in August they unilaterally cancelled the decisions of the Land Commission.¹⁴ Nevertheless, by October 1918, of the former privately-held land and noble estates of Kabarda, the Emergency Land Commission had temporarily allotted 114,987 acres to Kabarda’s neighbors.¹⁵ However, the collapse of Soviet power in the region in early 1919 postponed a determination on the ultimate fate of these lands.

After the reestablishment of the Terek Soviet Republic in April 1920, the land question remained a major concern of local leaders; second only to the security imperatives of mopping up the remnants of anti-Bolshevik resistance and eliminating the region’s widespread banditry. Indeed, local Soviet administrators correctly viewed the

¹³ Indeed, the tsarist administration named this district the Kabardian Okrug from 1858 until 1870. Kalmykov, *Integratsiia Kabardy i Balkarii*, 60-61. See also Artur Tsutsiev, *Atlas etnopoliticheskoi istorii Kavkaza (1774-2004)* (Moscow: Evropa, 2004), 42-46.

¹⁴ A. Karmov, 107-08.

¹⁵ 33,841 to the Balkars, 86,400 to the Karachai, 2,727 to the Ingush, and 17,120 to Ossetia (Digoria); *Ibid.*, 108.

unresolved land question as the primary cause of this banditry which usually took the form of cattle and horse thieving and grain requisitions.¹⁶

Between 1920 and 1924 local *gortsy* leaders did everything they could to turn the delimitation of ethno-national borders in their favor; in particular, they utilized history and mass mobilization. Seeking to convince Soviet officials of the necessity of transferring land from Kabarda to their future national territories, ruling elites of neighboring nationalities, such as the Karachai educator, scholar and revolutionary Umar Aliev, produced histories, often as official memoranda, depicting their people's economic destitution as the result of a long history of national oppression by the Kabardian people. These histories often rejected class-based analysis of social relations and depicted all Kabardians as the collective beneficiaries of tsarist colonial policies. Such purely ethno-national approaches to social reform would eventually lead to conflicts between some native leaders and the Soviet leadership in Moscow. Soviet leaders of the mountaineer peoples also mobilized their populations and co-ethnics living within the borders of Kabarda, rallying them to arms against Kabardians (and later, Balkars as well), instructing them to petition Soviet authorities, using the discourses of nation and class to legitimize claims to lands within Kabarda.¹⁷ Kabardian leaders responded by producing counter-mobilizations and counter-histories. They argued that Kabardians had suffered

¹⁶ E. F. Zhupikova, "Prichiny politicheskogo banditizma na Severnom Kavkaze v kontse grazhdanskoi voiny," in *Don i Severnyi Kavkaz v period stroitel'stva sotsializma*, ed. N.V. Kiseleva (Rostov-na-Donu: Rostovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet im. M.A. Suslova 1988), 45-47. Cattle-thieving had a long tradition in the North Caucasus and other parts of the empire during the tsarist period. See, for example, Virginia Martin, "Barimta: Nomadic Custom, Imperial Crime," in *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, eds. Daniel Brower and Edward Lazzerini (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1997), 249-70 and Thomas Barrett, "Lines of Uncertainty: The Frontiers of the North Caucasus," *Slavic Review* 45, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 494-95.

¹⁷ A. G. Kazharov, "Aliev U.D. i Kabardino-Karachaevskie etnoterritorial'nye otnosheniia v nachale 1920-x g.g.," in *Vymysel i istina*, 276-92.

equally if not greater than their mountaineer neighbors under tsarist rule, that the territory of Nalchik District (with the exception of the five mountaineer societies of the Balkars) was the historical national territory of the Kabardian people, and that any significant annexations from that territory would be a violation of the national rights of Kabardians and would lead to Kabarda's economic ruin.¹⁸

In early 1921 the People's Commissariat of Nationality Affairs (*Narkomnats*) and the Caucasus Bureau of the Communist Party (*Kavbiuro*) placed Kabardians—plains and foothills dwellers with relatively good land resources—in a common autonomous republic with their land-poor mountaineer neighbors. The creation of the Mountaineer (*Gorskaia*) Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (GASSR) was a product of the geopolitical situation of the time. While the independent Democratic Republic of Georgia still existed, the North Caucasus was one of the RSFSR's most strategically important and volatile international borders. Policymakers viewed the creation of a larger autonomous republic north of the Georgian border as the most effective means of securing this frontier and presenting a united front against anti-Bolshevik forces from the North Caucasus now in exile in Tiflis. This new administrative framework placed Kabarda in a vulnerable position because representatives of Kabarda's landless neighbors—given their peoples' combined demographic majority—dominated the central administration of the GASSR and were now in a position to implement their designs on Kabarda's territory. Kabarda's leaders quickly responded to signals that a new round of

¹⁸ For examples, see RGASPI 64/1/72 (1921): 13; GARF 5677/2/225 (1921): 35; and 1318/1/231 (1922): 6.

annexations was about to begin by obtaining Stalin's support¹⁹ and preemptively announcing the separation of Kabarda from the GASSR at the Fourth Congress of Soviets of the Kabardian District on June 13, 1921, under the pretext of "an absence of economic ties between Kabarda and the remaining population of the GSSR (sic)."²⁰ With the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia in the spring, the Mountaineer Republic lost its chief *raison d'être*. On September 1, 1921, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) officially decreed the separation of the Kabardian people from the GASSR and the formation of the Kabardian Autonomous Oblast.²¹ By cutting off Karachai and Balkaria from the rest of the GASSR (Ossetia, Ingushetia, and Chechnya) Kabarda's secession marked the beginning of the precipitous break-up of GASSR into smaller autonomous oblasts for its constituent nationalities.

Kabarda's separation from the GASSR resulted in the escalation of disputes between the newly formed Kabardian Autonomous Oblast (AO) and its neighbors (Karachai, the Mountaineer Republic, and after the dissolution of the later in July 1924, North Ossetia and Ingushetia) over the borders of this new administrative territory. These disputes centered on competing claims to jurisdiction over border villages and these villages' precious land allotments (pasturage, arable plots, and forests) located within the

¹⁹ Much to the convenience of Kabarda's leaders, Stalin spent several months in Nalchik during the summer of 1921 recovering from an illness in a sanatorium. For a discussion of Stalin's role in the separation of Kabarda from the GASSR see A. G. Kazharov, "Voprosy zemlevladieniia i zemlepol'zovaniia v usloviiakh stanoleniia i razvitiia gosudarstvennosti Kabardino-Balkarii v 1920-e gg," in *Zemel'nye otnosheniia v Kabarde i Balkarii*, 122-41.

²⁰ "21 maia 1921 g.—Vypiska iz protokola ob"edinennogo zasedaniia kabardinskogo okruzhnogo ispolnitel'nogo komiteta sovetov i okruzhnogo partiinogo komiteta o neobkhodimosti vydeleniia Kabardy v avtonomnuu oblast'," in *Za Vlast' Sovetov v Kabarde i Balkarii: Dokumenty i materialy po istorii bor'by za Sovetskuiu vlast' v Kabardino-Balkarskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti (1917-1922 gg.)*, P. Kh. Gugov et al. eds (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1957), 414-15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 438.

Kabardian AO. Having failed to secure much needed land through administrative wrangling, local leaders (with the exception of the Balkars who had secured an administrative settlement—discussed below)²² condoned the use of force as Karachai, Ossetian, and Ingush peasants, backed by local paramilitary militias, began making armed incursions into Kabarda, seizing pasturage, driving off cattle, stealing horses, raiding and occupying villages, and chasing peasants off their farmland. Kabarda's leaders, Betal Kalmykov and Nazir Katkhanov, responded by mobilizing their populations in defense of their “national” territory and “liberating” occupied villages and their allotments. Three main zones of conflict emerged, each of which corresponded to a contested border with a different community. The conflict along Kabardino-Balkaria's western border with Karachai revolved around rights to mountain pasturage along the Malka River (the trans-Malka pastures) and jurisdiction over the majority-Karachai village of Khasaut. Conflict erupted along Kabardino-Balkaria's eastern border with Ingushetia over small Ingush homesteads and their farmland located on former Bekovich-Cherkasskii land along the Kurp River. Finally, prolonged conflicts raged along Kabardino-Balkaria's southeastern border with North Ossetia around the Lesken and Uruk river valleys.

In a reflection of the role of “referee” that the metropole would continue to play in the Soviet period, local leaders declared that only intervention and definitive rulings on the part of the central authorities could end these hostilities. Between 1921 and 1924

²² The Kabardian and Balkar leaders reached a compromise by which the Balkars received much needed lands from Kabarda in exchange for Balkaria remaining administratively connected with Kabarda through the formation of a dual-titular Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast. The Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast was officially formed by VTsIK decree on January 16, 1922. See *ibid.*, 489 and Kazharov, “Voprosy zemlevladiiia i zemlepol'zovaniia,” 122-41. The Kabardino-Balkar union is discussed in detail below.

central and regional Soviet authorities formed eight land commissions charged with delimiting borders and ending the conflicts between Kabardino-Balkaria and its neighbors. Assassinations of expert witnesses, violence and intimidation of villagers by officials from the conflicting sides, and refusals to participate on the part of one of the sides (usually Kabarda) impeded these commissions' efforts.²³ Moreover, different Commissions, composed of members of different Soviet state organs, often approached question of border delimitation with different priorities and principles.²⁴ Some Commissions—notably the one headed by I. Smirnov—approached borders and land reform from a purely Marxist-Lenin ideological perspective, while other commissions—the Odintsov Commission for example—privileged economic and administrative concerns. Using the recommendations of the Odintsov Land Commission, the VTsIK passed a definitive decree on the borders of Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, and Terek Governorate (*Guberniia*) on July 21, 1924. Nevertheless, disputes over the interpretation of the delimitation decree and border disputes continued to periodically flare up through 1928.²⁵

The Land Question and the (Re)Unification of Kabarda and Balkaria

Among the mountaineers of the North Caucasus at the time of the Russian Revolution, the Balkars faced the greatest land hunger with about half an acre of arable land and hay fields per person. With 10.8 acres per person, the Kabardians of the plains were much

²³ A. Karmov, 112.

²⁴ Francine Hirsh discusses the often opposing priorities of different state organs charged with border delimitation. She finds a similar division between ideological and economic motivations. See Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, *Empire of Nations*, 62-100.

²⁵ A. Karmov, 113-20.

better supplied with good farmland and pasturage than any of the region's other indigenous communities.²⁶ Given this disparity, in 1917 the Balkars remained economically dependent upon land and grain from the Kabardian foothills and plains. Balkar leaders Magomed Eneev and Iusuf Nastuev, like those of other mountaineer peoples, viewed Soviet land and nationality policies as an opportunity to ameliorate their people's landlessness at the expense of their larger neighbor, Kabarda.

Immediately after the establishment of Soviet power in the North Caucasus in early March 1918, Balkar representatives petitioned the leadership of the Terek Soviet Republic for additional pasture land, citing the failure of that year's feed crop.²⁷ On March 25 the Terek Soviet Emergency Land Commission examined Balkar land needs and allotted the Balkar Societies 93 pasture plots, totaling 33,880 acres, from the Kabardian pastures for one year.²⁸ At the local level, the Nalchik District Soviet Land Commission decreed that, given the needs of the Balkars' transhumant stock-breeding economy, it was necessary "to give the laboring Mountaineer-Balkar population temporary use of pastures in the area of the Kabardian communal pastures and forest meadows that the Balkars had rented in 1917."²⁹ In other words, in accordance with Soviet legislation, the local administration canceled land rents and the Balkars retained access to lands that they had historically rented from Kabardians. Some sources claim that Kabardians' use of their mountain pastures had diminished as a result of banditry in the countryside in 1917 and, therefore, the allocation of extra mountain pastures to the

²⁶ Babich and Stepanov, 50.

²⁷ Mesiats, 83.

²⁸ A. Kazharov, "Voprosy zemlevladienie," 124.

²⁹ Ibid.

Balkars did not affect the Kabardian economy.³⁰ Increasing disputes over pastures between Kabardians and Balkars during the summer of 1918 belie this assertion. Concerned over the land disputes, Kabardian leaders used the Fourth Congress of the Peoples of Nalchik District, on August 8-12, to protest the temporary land allocations of the Emergency Land Commission on economic grounds (i.e. that these land transfers would hurt Kabarda's economy). On August 15, with the Balkar fraction abstaining, the Congress issued an official declaration condemning the temporary transfers and deeming them null-and-void.³¹ For their part, the Balkars sought permanent rights to these lands in the months that followed. On December 6, 1918, the Fifth Congress of the Peoples of the Terek issued a "Resolution on the Agrarian Question" which permanently gave the Balkars 65,837 acres.³² However, the collapse of Soviet power in the region prevented Soviet authorities from implementing these land reforms.

Soon after the reestablishment of Soviet power in the North Caucasus, the Balkars and neighboring mountaineer peoples renewed their calls for land redistribution in the region. In September 1920, the mountaineer-led Terek regional authorities issued an order calling for the transfer of 18,900 acres to land-poor Balkar families. In the event, the District Land Commission gathered 13,656 acres of former privately-held land for these families with the possibility of exchanging non-arable land for portions of the allotments

³⁰ Mesiats, 83.

³¹ "Protokol zasedaniia IV s'ezda narodov Nal'chikskogo okruga," in *Dokumenty po istorii bor'by za Sovetskuiu vlast' obrazovaniia avtonomii Kabardino-Balkarii, 1917-1922 gg.*, eds. R.Kh. Gugov and B. M. Zumakulov (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1983), 208-14.

³² "Rezoliutsiia s'ezda po agrarnomu voprosu," in Dzhanayev ed., *S'ezdy narodov Tereka, Tom II* (Ordzhonikidze: Ir, 1978), 241-42.

of the Kabardian villages Karmovo and Atazhukino-III.³³ This order further strained relations between Kabardians and Balkars.

On January 20, 1921, Kabarda and the Balkar societies entered into the newly-created Mountaineer Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (GASSR) as separate ethno-territorial districts: *Kabardinskii okrug* and *Balkarskii okrug*. This development marked the first administrative separation of Kabarda and Balkaria since their incorporation into the tsarist state in the early nineteenth century. Given the ethno-demographic transformations of the late-tsarist period, particularly the intermixing of Kabardian and Balkar lands, it is unsurprising that the issue of the borders between the new Kabardian and Balkar Districts became a fiercely disputed issue, further exacerbating already tense land relations between the two communities and their indigenous leaders. The immediate goal of the bureaucrat-policeman state in Moscow was to establish a system of administration and land relations that would facilitate the establishment of order out of the chaos of the Civil War.

The January 20, 1921 VTsIK Decree on the Formation of the Autonomous Mountain Soviet Socialist Republic did not define the GASSR's internal and external borders with any precision because it envisaged future land redistribution between administrative units according to the needs of individual ethnicities. For example, the decree called for formation of a Kabardian District from "the northern part of the former Nalchik District," a Balkar District from "the southern part of the former Nalchik District," and a Karachai district from "the western part of the former Nalchik District,

³³ Dзамикхов et al., 342.

the southern part of the Piatigorsk Department, and the southern part of Batalpashinsk Department of Kuban Oblast.”³⁴ Clearly, much work remained, and indeed, the conflict-plagued process of border delimitation in the North Caucasus lasted through 1926.

In January 1921, the VTsIK created the Nevskii Commission, the first of many centrally-mandated commissions charged with delimiting borders and resolving land disputes in the North Caucasus in the 1920s.³⁵ In addition to the substantial land requests submitted to the Nevskii Commission on behalf of Kabarda's other neighbors, sources suggest that the Balkar representatives to this land commission hoped to enlarge Balkaria's borders by resettling Kabardian villages from the foothills to the plains.³⁶ Kabardians and local Cossack communities—the latter being threatened with further deportations—protested what they viewed as the committee's extreme approach to the land question. Ultimately, the differences between the two sides (Kabardian/Cossack and mountaineer) paralyzed the Nevskii Commission. The same fate awaited the next commission, chaired by V.S. Muromtsev, sent in late February to solve the land question in the GASSR.³⁷ In a further escalation of tensions between Kabarda and Balkaria, on April 8 the Kabardian District Executive Committee issued a notice prohibiting Balkars from grazing their cattle on the Kabarda's plains pastures and demanding that the Balkars “drive those cattle already being grazed back to the mountains no later than April 15.”³⁸ The Kabardian leadership likely issued this prohibition in retaliation for recent Balkar

³⁴ “20 ianvaria 1921 g.—Dekret Vserossiiskogo Tsentral'nogo Iсполnitel'nogo Komiteta ob obrazovanii Avtonomnoi Gorskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki,” in *Za vlast' sovetov*, 364.

³⁵ A. Karmov, 113.

³⁶ GARF 130/5/740 (1921): 3

³⁷ A. Karmov, 114.

³⁸ “5-8 apreliia 1921 g.—Rezoliutsii I s"ezda sovetov Balkarskogo Okruga,” in *Za vlast' sovetov*, 466.

claims to Kabardians lands. On the same day, the First Congress of Soviets of the Balkar District passed a resolution condemning the prohibition, claiming that:

this order from the Kabardian Executive Committee damns all of the mountaineers' cattle to death and creates great material harm not only to Balkaria, but to the state as well...in the worst case the mountaineers will be forced to leave their cattle and flee to the mountains to avoid conflict with the Kabardians.³⁹

On May 21, 1921, four months after the creation of the GASSR, the Kabardian District Executive Committee resolved to begin the process of separating from the Mountaineer Republic as a means of preventing further land grabs by its neighbors, including the Balkars.⁴⁰

Despite assurances by Stalin that the separation of Kabarda “would not mean the collapse of the Mountaineer Republic,”⁴¹ it was clear that in losing Kabarda, the GASSR would be geographically separated from two of its remaining constituent ethnicities, the Balkars and the Karachai. It was only a matter of time before separation from their administrative center would cause Balkaria and Karachai to break away as well.

Meanwhile, during the summer of 1921, with borders still undefined and central authority far away, Kabardian, Balkar and Karachai peasants clashed repeatedly on the trans-Malka mountain pastures over contested allotments, the nebulous frontier zone so vital to Ermolov's pacification of Kabarda a century earlier.⁴² These disputes happened because of misunderstandings (or rejections) of the recent land reform decrees from the Terek government and a general absence of law enforcement, particularly in the mountains. In

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 414.

⁴¹ Ibid., 425.

⁴² Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kabardino-Balkarskoi Respubliki (TsGA KBR) 2/1/2 (1921): 18-28.

late July, for example, the shepherds from the neighboring villages of Khabaz (Balkar) and Karmovo (Kabardian) clashed over access to the trans-Malka mountain pastures.⁴³ Elsewhere, shootouts occurred between the Balkars of Ianikoi and the Kabardians of Lechinkai over the hay fields around Nizhnii Batyrkhai.⁴⁴ On August 20, 1921, the villagers of Lechinkai reported that at noon, as they were baling hay in the fields, a group of mountaineers from Ianikoi besieged them, killing the Chair of the village Revkom and wounding two others.⁴⁵

These conflicts arose from Balkars using the lands allotted to them on a temporary basis in 1918 and 1920 and the Kabardian leadership's refusal to continue to recognize these land transfers; the result was a general state of lawlessness on the mountain pastures, a condition that was only exacerbated by the absence of sufficient law enforcement personnel.⁴⁶ Indeed, on August 31, the day before the VTsIK issued its decree formally creating the Kabardian Autonomous Oblast, Betal Kalmykov, the head of the Kabardian Revolutionary Committee (*Revkom*), dispatched an inter-ministerial telegram to Moscow requesting that Kabarda retain its pre-revolutionary borders, before the Terek government divided up the Kabardian summer pastures.⁴⁷ In the event, the September 1 decree merely named the villages included within the new Kabardian AO; the final settlement of the disputes over borders depended on intervention from Moscow. In late 1921, Kalmykov telegraphed Kabardino-Balkaria's representative in the VTsIK, N. Nazarov, that "the Balkar District has raised claims to forests included within the

⁴³ TsGA KBR 2/1/7 (1921-1922): 2-5.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 15-18.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁶ TsGA KBR 2/1/2 (1921): 28

⁴⁷ GARF 5677/2/225 (1921): 43.

borders of Kabarda and, moreover, the Balkars are using our forest lands and fields, which will bring a material loss to the economic development of Kabarda.” Kalmykov requested that Nazarov “immediately petition the Peoples’ Commissariats of Nationality Affairs and Internal Affairs to remove these fields and forests from the Balkars’ use and to secure Kabarda from future [land] seizures of this kind.”⁴⁸

In early December 1921 the chair of the dissolved VTsIK land commission from earlier that year, V. S. Muromtsev, suggested a solution to at least some of the problems of ethno-national border delimitation and land use between Kabarda and its neighbors: the amalgamation of Kabardians and Balkars into a shared Autonomous Oblast.⁴⁹ This idea was based on several assumptions. First, and probably most important for the Soviet state's long-term goals, was the economic imperative. Given the historic symbiosis between Kabardians and Balkars, especially in terms of interdependent economic relations, the foothills and plains of Kabarda together with the mountains of Balkaria formed an integrated economic system.⁵⁰ Indeed, much more than a local administrative center, the city of Nalchik formed a common economic center for both Kabardians and Balkars. Muromtsev, therefore, argued that a common administrative unit for the Kabardians and Balkars would promote the economic development of both communities. Second, Muromtsev argued that the creation of a shared Autonomous Oblast would promote the more immediate goal of solving the land disputes between Kabardians and Balkars. Essentially, the amalgamation of Kabarda and Balkaria would lessen the stakes

⁴⁸ TsGA KBR 2/1/7 (1921-1922): 82.

⁴⁹ A. Kazharov, “Voprosy zemlevladieni,” 128.

⁵⁰ I borrow the concept of complementarity from Fredrik Barth. See *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 18-20.

of land redistribution for Kabarda. If the lands at stake, regarded by the Kabardians (or at least their leaders) as their national territory, were kept within a territory with a majority Kabardian population and treated as the common property of all citizens of Kabardino-Balkaria, then the idea of giving up land for the use of land-poor Balkars would seem more palatable to the Kabardian leadership. If nothing else, such an arrangement would incline the Kabardian leadership toward compromise with the Balkars. Indeed, compromise is ultimately what led to a resolution, however temporary, of the Kabardino-Balkar question. On December 7, 1921, after discussing Muromtsev's suggestion, the Kabardian Executive Committee issued a non-binding decree accepting "the possibility of the unification of Balkaria with Kabarda under conditions than can be determined by the Kabardian Oblast and Balkar District Congresses of Soviets."⁵¹

With the idea of unifying Kabarda and Balkaria floating around in official circles, the Balkar leadership, apprehensive about its ability to secure a favorable land-reform settlement within a Kabardian-dominated Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast, sent a memorandum to the *Narkomnats* requesting the separation of the Balkar District from the GASSR and the formation of a Balkar Autonomous Oblast on December 9.⁵² While its author is unknown, as Artur Kazharov, a specialist on Soviet nation-building in the North Caucasus, points out, someone well-versed in Soviet nationalities policy and Marxist-Leninist theory composed this nuanced memorandum, likely a party worker sent from Moscow.⁵³

⁵¹ "7 dekabria 1921 g.—Vypiska iz protokola zasedaniia prezidiuma Ispolkoma Kabardinskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti o vozmozhnosti ob'edineniia Balkarii s Kabardoi," in *Za vlast' sovetov*, 488.

⁵² GARF 1318/1/10 (1921): 31.

⁵³ A. Kazharov, "Voprosy zemlevladienie," 129.

First, this memo argued that the separation of Balkaria from Kabarda during the formation of the GASSR and the current desire of the Balkars to form an Autonomous Oblast subordinate to Moscow were dictated by the need to solve the land question between Kabarda and Balkaria. Given the seemingly irreconcilable differences between Kabardian and Balkar leaders on this issue, this task was something that could only be accomplished by the intervention of a higher authority. Initially, that authority was the GASSR; however, when Kabarda broke away it became clear that the GASSR government could no longer secure Balkaria a favorable resolution to the land question. Therefore, the memo argued, Balkaria needed to form an Autonomous Oblast, with equal status to that of Kabarda, so that both Kabarda and Balkaria would be directly subordinate to Moscow, the only higher authority with the power to solve the land question. Second, the memo argued that a multi-ethnic federation of mountaineer peoples, such as the GASSR, could only exist once “national mistrust” had been eliminated and “economic equality” had been attained between its constituent peoples. In order for this equalization to occur, the author continued, it would necessary to “1) solve the disputed land question between the landless mountain zone and the land-abundant plains; and 2) implement the total sovietization of the mountaineers through development of native schools, government, and courts.” Extending this argument to the planned unification of Kabarda and Balkaria, the author contends that, given Kabarda's historic economic and political dominance over Balkaria, which has inhibited the latter's economic and cultural development, the two peoples should not be unified until these disparities had been erased. Third, accepting the premise that Kabarda and Balkaria

remain economically intertwined, the author envisaged the creation of a “permanent economic council” to foster the economic cooperation and development of the two peoples. Finally, the author argued that, through its stockbreeding economy, Balkaria had the economic basis for an independent existence.⁵⁴ This memorandum clearly piqued the interest of some in Moscow and, on December 14, the VTsIK formed a commission to study the question of the formation of a Balkar Autonomous Oblast.⁵⁵

In the month between the beginning of the Balkar bid for independence from Kabarda and the January 16 VTsIK decree creating a united Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast, both sides lobbied intensely in Moscow. While many of the sources on the behind-the-scenes negotiations are unavailable to researchers, it is possible to reconstruct the general progression of events. While the Balkar representatives, led by Magomet Eneev, continued to lobby in Moscow for the creation of a Balkar Autonomous Oblast separate from Kabarda, events next-door made the amalgamation of the two peoples more likely. On December 17, 1921, the VTsIK decreed the creation of a shared Autonomous Oblast for the Karachai and Cherkes peoples immediately to the west of Kabarda and Balkaria.⁵⁶ This move, guided by the same economic and administrative principles behind the proposed Kabardino-Balkar merger, set an important precedent and signaled Moscow's turn towards an official policy of combining smaller ethnicities in the interests of economic development and administrative efficiency. Moreover, on December 29, an article appeared in the regional newspaper, *Gorskaia Pravda*, which, in

⁵⁴ GARF 1318/1/432 (1921): 3-4.

⁵⁵ A. Kazharov, “Voprosy zemlevladienie,” 130.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

addition to reporting on the on the possible merger of Kabarda and Balkaria, added that “two representatives had been appointed to the commission for the delimitation of the border of Balkaria and Kabarda.”⁵⁷

Negotiations seemed to be underway for a settlement to the border question that would either clear the way for the reunification of Kabarda and Balkaria or allow for the creation of a Balkar AO. During the first days of January 1922, the latter seemed to be the most likely, as the VTsIK has issued a draft resolution “on the formation of an Autonomous Oblast for the Balkar people” that would have allotted Balkaria with much of the disputed pasture lands and Balkar villages within the territory of Kabarda.⁵⁸ While agreeing to many of the resolution's provisions, the Kabardian leadership vociferously objected to three of its provisions: 1) the transfer of the village of Khabaz because of its location far from the Balkar national border; 2) the transfer of Nalchik's resort district of Dolinsk to Balkaria; and 3) the inclusion of forest meadows located on Kabardian lands within the Balkar AO. Finally, this protest note called for the establishment of an authoritative committee to make a determination on the border based on a thorough examination of the territory concerned.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, two days later on January 6, 1922, the VTsIK approved the decree on the formation of the Balkar Autonomous Oblast.⁶⁰ Balkar autonomy, however, was short lived. Betal Kalmykov of Kabarda and Muromtsev, the VTsIK representative to the North Caucasus, prevailed upon Stalin to cancel the January 6 VTsIK decree. In addition to the economic and administrative arguments

⁵⁷ *Gorskaiia Pravda*, no. 188 (December 29, 1921).

⁵⁸ GARF 1318/1/10 (1922): 31.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ A. Kazharov, “Voprosy zemlevladienie,” 131.

against the separation Kabarda and Balkaria, both Kalmykov and Muromtsev argued that the creation of a separate Balkar AO would further exacerbate tensions between Kabardians and Balkars because of the interconnected nature of their land-use and settlement patterns and make it more difficult to solve the land question.⁶¹ Three days later, on January 9, the Narkomnats drafted a decree canceling the January 6 decree and creating a Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast.⁶² On January 16, 1922, the Presidium of the VTsIK formally issued the decree “On the Formation of the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast.”⁶³

While this decree ensured that Kabarda and Balkaria would be merged together de jure into one administrative unit, de facto this decree remained unimplemented throughout much of 1922. Two of the decree's provisions created sharp conflict between the sides, almost leading to a complete breakdown of relations and a descent into armed conflict on at least one occasion.

The first point of contention stemmed from a provision stating that “the exact borders of the Oblast, as well as the borders of Kabarda and Balkaria [within the oblast], would be determined on the ground by a special VTsIK Commission, which will also resolve all land disputes between the sides concerned.” This new commission, chaired by I. Dmitriev, surveyed land, visited villages and interviewed villagers about their land-use practices from March to May 1922. The commission received numerous petitions from groups of Balkars requesting land within Kabarda. According to various reports, the

⁶¹ GARF 1318/1/432 (1922): 6-7.

⁶² “9 ianvaria 1921 g.—Vypiska iz protokola zasedaniia kollegii narkomnatsa o vydelenii Balkarii iz Gorskoj Respubliki i obrazovanii Kabardino-Balkarskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti,” in *Za vlast' sovetov*, 488-89.

⁶³ “16 ianvaria 1922 g.—Vypiska iz protokola zasedaniia prezidiuma VTsIK ob obrazovanii Kabardino-Balkarskoi Avtonomnoi Obasti,” in *ibid.*, 489-90.

Kabardian side, unhappy with the Dmitriev Commission's initial findings, tried its best to halt the work of the commission. For example, in a May 10 telegram complaining about the actions of the Kabardian leadership, the Dmitriev Commission reported to Moscow:

representatives of Kabarda led by Kalmykov are constantly delaying the commission's work. On the eve of a decision regarding the land disputes...they demonstratively left the final general meeting, voicing fears that the commission's rulings will provoke bloodshed; however, we have not issued any ruling or voiced any suggestions...During our field work, Kabardian attempts at resolving land disputes through force of arms in Balkar villages were only stopped through our intervention. We ask that you call the Kabardian leaders to order, and hold them responsible for the consequences of their calls to arms among the Kabardian population.⁶⁴

Despite claims from the Kabardian leadership that the Dmitriev Commission's decision would “economically and politically destroy Kabarda,”⁶⁵ the sides reached a compromise and, on June 22, the VTsIK passed a resolution delimiting the borders of Kabarda, Balkaria and Karachai. Each side had some of its demands met. The Kabardian side granted many, but not all, of the Balkar land requests in exchange for having its northwest border with Karachai delimited so that Kabarda would retain its mountain pastures between the rivers Malka and Kichmalka. In the event, Kabarda conceded 27,000 acres to the Balkars and 86,400 acres to Karachai under the terms of the VTsIK decree.⁶⁶

The second impediment to the implementation of the January 16 decree on the creation of the Kabardino-Balkar AO was a provision that called for the retention of separate Kabardian and Balkar Executive Committees and the creation of a “common

⁶⁴ GARF 1318/1/231 (1922): 7-8.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 73.

⁶⁶ A. Kazharov, “Voprosy zemlevladienie,” 137.

unified (*obshchii ob"edinennyi*) Kabardino-Balkar Oblast Executive Committee formed on the basis of parity."⁶⁷ This provision, a concession to the Balkars, was an effort to create political equality between Kabarda and its smaller Balkar neighbor within a shared administrative unit. Throughout 1922 the Kabardian leadership protested this provision on the grounds that it was unfair and unconstitutional. On April 21, Kalmykov telegraphed Moscow arguing that "local conditions do not allow for the implementation of the decree because...the rights of the population of Kabarda to representation are being made equal to those of Balkaria whose population is ten times [sic] smaller."⁶⁸ Here too, the sides compromised. According to the "Conditions for the Unification of Kabarda and Balkaria," ratified on August 17, 1922, instead of dividing representation equally between Kabarda and Balkaria, representation would be split between Kabardino-Balkaria's three main cultural-linguistic communities—Balkars, Kabardians and Russians. Moreover, rather than retaining separate ethnically-defined executive committees at the oblast level, the Kabardian Executive Committee would be replaced by the Kabardino-Balkar Executive Committee while the Balkar Executive Committee would take on the status of a district (*okruzhnoi*) executive committee.⁶⁹ While this compromise led to the formation of a Kabardino-Balkar government on the basis of ethnic parity, this parity was ephemeral. According to the Soviet Constitution, the number of delegates elected to local Congresses of Soviets, which formed the basis for regional executive committees, had to be proportionate to the size of the population. Therefore, while the first post-unification

⁶⁷ "16 ianvaria 1922 g.—Vypiska iz protokola zasedaniia prezidiuma VTsIK," 489-90.

⁶⁸ GARF 1318/1/16 (1922): 61.

⁶⁹ *Krasnaia Kabarda*, no. 157 (August 23, 1922), 1.

Congress of Soviets in Kabardino-Balkaria saw the creation of an Executive Committee with 15 Kabardian, 15 Balkar and 15 Russian representatives, sources indicate that in all future cases, nationalities were represented in local government more or less according to their share of the population.⁷⁰

The unification of Kabarda and Balkaria by no means solved all the problems between Kabardians and Balkars and land disputes continued throughout the 1920s as the Soviet administration carried out sweeping land reforms. However, after 1922, when disputes arose, Kabardian and Balkar leaders treated them as land disputes between villages, rather than struggles over rights to national territory. To be sure, for the villagers involved in disputes within Kabardino-Balkaria after 1922, the issues at stake were no less important; they involved access to land resources so vital to their daily existence. Local ethno-political elites ethnicized these everyday issues in order gain more land and resources for their territories. With the absence of an ethno-national border in the immediate vicinity after Balkaria's borders became those of a district, these villages were unable to effectively utilize the national principle and gain institutional supports to help them press their claims. With nothing to gain by calling their co-ethnics to arms, Kabardian and Balkar administrators worked together to solve land disputes on the basis of Soviet economic-administrative imperatives, rather than national ones. On the other hand, Kabardian and Balkar leaders did invoke the national principle when it came to defending the borders of Kabardino-Balkaria from annexations by neighboring ethno-national administrative units. For example, in 1927, Kabardian and Balkar representatives

⁷⁰ K. F. Dzamikhov and M. G. Kumakhov, "O stanovlenii Kabardino-Balkarskoi Avtonomnoi Oblast," *Politika i pravo v sfere etnosudarstvennykh otnoshenii Kabardino-Balkarii*, no. 2 (2001): 261-68.

successfully worked together and mobilized villagers to prevent Balkar pastures along the Khaznidon River from being incorporated into the neighboring North-Ossetian Autonomous Oblast.⁷¹

In forming a common autonomous administrative unit for the Kabardian and Balkar peoples, the majority of those involved—from central Soviet officials to many local native elites to Kabardian and Balkar shepherds—recognized to one degree or another the important symbiotic relationship that had developed between Kabardians and Balkars over the centuries. However unequal their relations, Kabardians and Balkars had become interdependent stakeholders in the local system of inter-communal relations based on economic complementarity, and the costs of dismantling this system appeared too risky. Since the early 1990s, the land imbalance between Kabardians and Balkars has led to renewed tensions and calls for separation on the part of the leaders of the Balkar national movement. However, once again, the perceived risks involved in such a separation—inter-communal violence and economic decline—have thus far prevented the breakup of Kabardino-Balkaria.

Kabarda and the Cossacks and Settlers of the Terek: Unlikely Allies

Kabardians, *inogorodnie* settlers, and Cossacks—ethno-cultural groups with historic mutual animosities and histories of cooperation—were both under threat of losing land to neighboring mountaineer communities. Among the strategies used by Cossack and Kabardian leaders to avoid losing land to neighboring communities, both sides sought to

⁷¹ See GARF A-406/9/526 (1927).

foster and take advantage of the idea of close Kabardian-Cossack-settler relations. In promoting the idea of Kabardian-settler (whether Cossack or *inogorodnie*) friendship, the leaders of Kabarda hoped that the “bureaucrat-policeman state,” with its great concern for maintaining order, would see the advantages of leaving areas of non-Kabardian (Cossack and *inogorodnie*) settlement under Kabardian jurisdiction. The alternative would be placing them under the jurisdiction of mountaineer peoples with whom, according to the Kabardian leaders and their Cossack and settler allies, they had troubled relations.

To borrow the title of a recent study of conquest and colonization in the North Caucasus, in confronting the rapid changes brought on by tsarist and, later, Soviet rule, the peoples of the region, native and settler alike, faced “bitter choices.”⁷² These choices were more complex than those allowed by the master narratives of “friendship of peoples” and “genocidal conquest” that have dominated discourse on the North Caucasus in Russia and the West respectively. The decision taken by the majority of the Kabardian princes and nobles to submit to tsarist rule in the 1820s was dictated both by their much-weakened position and their desire to preserve some of their privileges as native elites. Whatever the cause, Kabardian elites chose sides with a heavy heart. The question of submitting to colonial rule tore noble families, like the Anzorovs (see chapter two), apart. A century later, the Cossacks of the North Caucasus faced similarly difficult choices, as native pro-Bolshevik elites, touting Soviet support for national self-determination and the liberation of the oppressed peoples of the colonial world, began a process of decolonization—a process initially supported by the Bolsheviks for both pragmatic and

⁷² Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices*.

ideological reasons and one that threatened the Cossacks' economic standing. The Terek Cossacks, as the former privileged class of colonizers (though not without their own internal social tensions), would have preferred to retain a separate "autonomous" administrative status rather than be incorporated (with brief exceptions) into neighboring national districts of Caucasian peoples. The choice of many Cossacks to take up arms against Soviet power was a natural response to threats upon their lives and property. In these conditions, cooperation with Kabarda, once an enemy of the Cossacks and victim of Cossack colonization, appeared as a last hope for the Cossacks to retain some of their lands. Seen in purely utilitarian terms, the behavior of feudal Kabarda and the Cossacks during their respective periods of crisis is anything but complex—their choices were dictated by a desire to retain their land, a desire to survive.

Not to diminish the suffering of Kabardians and Cossacks during the Civil War and early 1920s, however, the *inogorodnie*—a diverse contingent of Russian and European peasants who resettled to the North Caucasus during the late-imperial period—are the silent victims of this story. Forced from their homelands by landlessness, these families sought respite in the far-off and unfamiliar North Caucasus, a region facing its own "land question." While managing to establish small homesteads on rented land, these settlers did not enjoy the rights of permanent residents, and were scorned by Cossacks and mountaineers alike. When regional tensions exploded into violent conflict in 1918, the settlers were caught in the crossfire between Cossacks and mountaineers. Settlers, such as the Germans of Gnadenburg and the Russians of Raz'dolnoe, had no allegiances

and no historic grievances to resolve, yet they were among the hardest hit by the violence of the Civil War in the North Caucasus.

A Draw toward Kabarda, a Draw toward Russia: Kabardians, Russians and Cossacks

As we have seen, in early 1921, motivated mainly by geopolitical concerns, the Soviet leadership placed Kabarda in a common autonomous republic (the GASSR) with its mountaineer neighbors. By the summer of 1921, Kabarda began the process of breaking away from the GASSR as a means to prevent further land transfer to their neighbors. While the main reason for Kabarda's separation from the GASSR was the threat of further land grabs, the Kabardian leadership understood that Moscow would not sympathize with such an argument. Instead, Kabarda's leaders argued that Kabarda had "an economic draw [*tiagotenie*] toward neighboring Russian regions because it was through them that [European] culture had come to Kabarda."⁷³ In a display of Kabardino-Russian unity at the 4th Congress of Soviets, Kirochin, the representative of Kabarda's Russian population, declared "We see that both the Kabardian and Russian people share the same point of view on this question and the same desire."⁷⁴ On 1 September 1921, the VTsIK officially decreed the Kabardian AO.⁷⁵

The initial response to being included in GASSR of the Terek Cossacks, who were under threat of losing their land and being deported by landless mountaineers backed by their GASSR government, was similar to that of Kabarda; they sought greater

⁷³ GARF 5677/2/225 (1921) : 6.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 7 ob.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 438.

autonomy. After the restoration of Soviet power in 1920 the regional authorities incorporated the Terek Cossack *stanitsy* along the Georgian Military Highway in Kabarda and Ossetia, formerly part of the predominantly Cossack Sunzha District (*otdel*), into the national districts of the surrounding Kabardian and Ossetian populations. On March 5, 1921, the Terek Cossacks called a congress in the *stanitsa* Sleptsovskaja and voiced the idea of forming an autonomous Terek Cossack territory with its center in Grozny. On March 18, 1921, the Congress of the People of the Terek Line decreed the formation of a Cossack District Executive Committee subordinate to Grozny that included seven *stanitsy*, three homesteads, and one settlement. In this way the Terek Cossacks hoped to end their subordination to the mountaineer administrations and prevent further land annexations and deportations. On May 7, 1921, the Greater Presidium of the Soviet of People's Commissars of the GASSR issued a decree forbidding the formation of a Cossack district in the Republic because this would give them greater autonomy in decisions of land redistribution.⁷⁶ On May 21 the Cossack Executive Committee protested that decision and appealed to Moscow, declaring that "the transfer of the *stanitsy* of the Terek Line to the national [mountaineer] executive committees is a violation of minority rights."⁷⁷ Ultimately, Moscow upheld the GASSR leadership's decision to incorporate the Cossack *stanitsy* into the surrounding national districts of Kabarda and Ossetia.

Having failed to secure an ethno-territorial district of their own the Terek Cossacks of the Georgian Military Highway sought incorporation into Kabarda rather

⁷⁶ Tiutiunina, 101.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Ibid.

than Ossetia or Ingushetia. Realizing that Kabarda was also trying to preserve its land from annexation by neighboring communities Kabardian and Cossack leaders found common cause. The Kabardian leadership was more than happy to incorporate Cossack lands into the administrative borders of Kabarda during a time when it was losing land to neighboring peoples. For their part, the Terek Cossacks viewed Kabarda as by far the lesser of multiple evils. Kabarda, seeking to preserve its own lands and being relatively well supplied with land to begin with, did not represent a threat to the Cossacks. The first of multiple petitions by Terek Cossacks requesting incorporation into Kabarda came from the *stanitsa* Aleksandrovskaja on January 23, 1921. During the creation of the GASSR in early 1921 the Ossetian leadership hoped to annex all of the Cossack *stanitsy* of the former Sunzha Department to Ossetia (the Digora and Vladikavkaz Districts), including the three *stanitsy* along the Kabardian portion of the Georgian Military Highway, Aleksandrovskaja, Kotliarevskaja, and Prishibskaja.⁷⁸ Having been confronted by Ossetian raids and the prospect of ceding land to Ossetian peasants since early 1920,⁷⁹ it is unsurprising that Aleksandrovskaja immediately protested Ossetia's plans for incorporation of the *stanitsa* into Vladikavkaz district. Terek Cossacks protested this looming administrative change because in the Soviet political context and in contrast to the tsarist period, the regional administration would not be composed of officials who viewed them as loyal servants of the state. In 1921 Vladikavkaz District was run by pro-Bolshevik Ossetian mountaineer leaders hoping to ameliorate their people's landlessness at the expense of Cossack lands. Citing the long-standing social and economic ties

⁷⁸ Ibid., 109.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 104.

between their Cossack *stanitsa* and the neighboring Kabardian villages and the distance to the Ossetian administrative center, Vladikavkaz, the Cossacks of Aleksandrovskaiia and the remaining two *stanitsy* succeeded in their goal of being annexed into neighboring Kabarda rather than land-poor Ossetia. By incorporating into the Kabardino-Balkar AO, the Cossacks of these *stanitsy* were able to retain their land and avoid further violent conflict with Ossetia.

Attempts at incorporation into Kabarda by other Cossack *stanitsy* on the borders of Kabardian settlement, such as Zmeiskaia (to the east) and Soldatskaia (to the north), did not meet with the same success as the three *stanitsy* within Kabarda. On March, 15, 1923, a meeting of the Zmeiskaia village assembly petitioned to separate from the Digora-Ossetian Okrug of the GASSR and join the neighboring Kabardino-Balkar AO. With the *stanitsa*'s northern and western edges bordering Kabarda, the petitioners cited their geographic proximity to Kabarda and "most lively economic relations with [Kabardian] villages."⁸⁰ However, it was the Cossacks' grievances with the GASSR that provided the greatest motivation for incorporation into Kabarda. In addition to complaints about disproportionately high taxes and requisitions and the inability of local authorities to protect villagers from raiding and banditry, the land question was a prime motivating factor in Zmeiskaia's decision to separate. The Cossack petitioners complained:

In terms of the land question, the local Digoria authorities treat the *stanitsa* Zmeiskaia with complete arbitrariness [*proizvol*] despite the latter's acute land shortage. For example, 1) the annexation of 2,990 desiatins (8,073 acres) [from the Zmeiskaia allotment] which has remained mostly unworked for the last two years; 2) the forced, illegal settlement into the *stanitsy* of 60 Ossetian families; 3)

⁸⁰ GARF 5677/4/323 (1923): 4.

the grazing of cattle on our lands by Ossetian militiamen with the permission of Digoria authorities, destroying our glades and fields.⁸¹

In response to this petition, the GASSR Executive Committee argued to Moscow that “as a land –rich Cossack society,”⁸² Zmeiskaia’s petition for incorporation into Kabarda “has no basis, except for the Cossack’s desire to retain their lands, which during socialist land reforms [*zemleustroistvo*] would likely be subject to redistribution anyway.”⁸³ In addition, the GASSR denied the existence of close economic ties between Zmeiskaia and Kabarda, claiming instead that geographically and economically Zmeiskaia was tied to Ossetia.⁸⁴

On August 16, 1923, after studying the situation on the ground, the VTsIK land commission sent from Moscow to resolve land disputes between Kabarda and its neighbors, under the chairmanship of I. Smirnov, sent its recommendations regarding the Zmeiskaia question to Moscow. The Smirnov Commission based its ruling on spatial layout and economic factors. Siding with the GASSR, the commission determined that the *stanitsa* is geographically and economically connected more closely with Ossetia than Kabarda and that incorporation into Kabarda would result in administrative and economic complications for Ossetia.⁸⁵ While the lands around Zmeiskaia may have once been thoroughly Kabardian, after over a century of resettlement and war, by the early twentieth century Zmeiskaia, though located on the frontiers of two cultural-linguistic communities, was within the socio-economic orbit of Ossetia rather than Kabarda. Thus,

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 19.

⁸³ Ibid., 17.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁸⁵ GARF 1318/1/51 (1923): 54.

neither national nor economic arguments could save Zmeiskaia from sharing its lands with its Ossetian neighbors.

The Embattled Villages of Lesser Kabarda

Recent studies have demonstrated that multiple factors guided Soviet ethno-national border delimitation.⁸⁶ Depending on their background and institutional affiliation, Soviet policymakers weighed ethnographic, ideological, economic, and administrative concerns during border delimitation. The Smirnov Commission sent by Moscow to the North Caucasus in 1923 approached questions of land reform and borders from an almost purely Marxist ideological perspective, privileging class concerns in its recommendations. Given the ethnically stratified social structure of the central Caucasus between land-poor mountaineers and relatively land-rich Kabardians and Cossacks after the expropriation of local tsarist-era elites, and his agenda of social equalization, Smirnov was especially receptive to Ossetian, Ingush and Karachai claims to Kabardian and Cossacks lands. Among other land transfers, the Smirnov Commission tentatively approved GASSR requests for the transfer of much of the remaining land of Lesser Kabarda to Ossetia and Ingushetia. Smirnov's plan, which was based on an equalization of land holdings between Kabardians and their mountaineer neighbors, essentially called

⁸⁶ See Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 31-72; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 145-86; Arne Haugen, *The Establishment of National Republics*; Edgar, *Tribal Nation*; Brown, *A Biography of No Place*; and Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Saparov, "From Conflict to Autonomy"; idem., "Why Autonomy?."

for all of Lesser Kabarda outside of the official village allotments of the region's nine Kabardian villages to be transferred to landless Ossetians and Ingush.⁸⁷

The lands set for administrative reassignment to the GASSR included a diverse mix of settler villages and homesteads on the lands of former Kabardian nobles of the Kurp region, south of Mozdok on the right bank of the Terek and east of the left bank of the Kurp River including: the Kumyk village Kizliarskoe (the former Bekovich-Cherkasskii aul); the German colony Gnadenburg; and the Slavic (mixed Ukrainian, Russian, and Bulgarian) village and homestead Razdol'noe and Sukhotskii. Given their location on the unprotected plains of the tumultuous borderland between the Cossacks (to north), Chechens (to the east), Ingush and Ossetians (to the south), and Kabardians (to the west), these *inogorodnie* villagers suffered greatly during the fighting of the Civil War and the mountaineer raiding that followed. As part of Lesser Kabarda during the late-imperial period, these villages remained part of Kabarda after the revolution.

When news reached these villages of their impending transfer to the administrative jurisdiction of the Ingush Okrug of the GASSR, each village quickly sent petitions to Moscow protesting this transfer. The heads of the local village Soviets requested that they remain within the Kabardino-Balkar AO, citing the history of conflict between their village and neighboring Ingush populations, unsanctioned Ingush land seizures, and the inability of the GASSR to protect them from raiding bands. On the other hand, the petitioners claimed that they had “always had good neighborly relations with

⁸⁷ RGASPI 65/1/110 (1923): 2-5.

Kabardians.”⁸⁸ The Kabardino-Balkar leadership, of course, also protested against the transfer of these villages, along with large swathes of land elsewhere, and supported the villages’ petitions to remain within the Kabardino-Balkar AO. The GASSR leadership also took measures to convince the villagers to drop their protests and accept their new administrative jurisdiction. For example, in a six-page letter to the residents of Gnadenburg German colony, the head of the Council of Peoples Commissars of the GASSR, Sakhandzherei Mamsurov, addressed all of the villagers’ concerns. Mamsurov assured the Gnadenburgers that the GASSR was now able to insure their protection from raiding by Ingush bands; he also promised that the GASSR will not take their land; and finally he promised them administrative autonomy within the GASSR.⁸⁹ Mamsurov also tried to assuage the Gnadenburgers by arguing that the GASSR was better able to provide for the economic and cultural development of its citizens than Kabardino-Balkaria. As evidence of the GASSR’s purportedly superior economic and cultural infrastructure, Mamsurov enumerated the schools, institutes, economic cooperatives, and other institutions available in the GASSR. Responding to the Germans’ argument that they are more culturally advanced than the Ingush and other mountaineers of the GASSR, Mamsurov wrote, “You speak of your culture superiority—very good. Mountaineer power fully supports this. For example, at the Mountaineer exhibit of agriculture, crafts, and industry [in Moscow] was recognized as one of the best in all the RSFSR, winning 160 prizes.”⁹⁰

⁸⁸ GARF 1318/1/148 : 36-39.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 40-43.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 41.

In this competition for the allegiances of this culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse cluster of villages, actions spoke louder than words. Whereas the villages had not faced conflict from their Kabardian neighbors, the relations between settlers of Kurp region and the Cossacks to the north remained tense and, more importantly, the villagers lived in fear of Ingush and other mountaineers to the south and east. Despite the assurances of their villages' inviolability by the mountaineer government, the villagers had been on the receiving end of one too many mountaineer raids, especially since the breakdown of order in 1917, and were naturally skeptical of the GASSR's ability to ensure their security. With the final breakup of the GASSR into the Ingush and North Ossetian Autonomous Oblasts and the Sunzha (Cossack) Okrug in the summer of 1924, Moscow sent yet another commission to the North Caucasus to reexamine administrative borders in the region. This presented a new opportunity for Kabarda to regain some of the land that it had given up under the recommendations of the Smirnov commission a year earlier;⁹¹ it also presented an opportunity for villagers unhappy with their administrative jurisdiction, like those of Kizliarskoe, Gnadenburg, and Razdol'noe of the Kurp region, to petition for the administrative-territorial transfer of their villages. The chair of this new commission, S. Odintsov of the People's Commissariat of Land (*Narkomzem*), disagreed with the approach taken by Smirnov, a representative of the VTsIK, during the previous land commission. Odintsov criticized the work of the Smirnov Commission for being too ideological and disregarding state

⁹¹ As we have seen, large parts of historic Lesser Kabarda had long since been settled by Ossetians and Ingush. The Kabardian leadership did not harbor any hopes of regaining control of these lands. Rather, it insisted on the preservation for Kabarda of the 1917 borders of Nalchik District.

economic concerns. Therefore, while Smirnov recommended granting any and all Kabardian lands that Ossetians and Ingush had ever owned or rented, however briefly, to the GASSR to alleviate the mountaineers' landlessness, Odintsov considered how transferring a particular allotment would affect the economies of the two oblasts. While Kabarda's neighbors still retained many of the allotments transferred to them under the rulings of the Smirnov Commission, Odintsov made significant changes to the border in favor of Kabarda and ruled out further deportations of Russians from the mountaineer regions of the North Caucasus.⁹²

In terms of the Kurp villages of Kizliarskoe, Gnadenburg, Razdol'noe, and Sukhotskii, Odintsov recommended their reincorporation into Kabarda on the basis of national rights and economic development. In his concluding report from July 8, 1924, Odintsov explains:

I cannot agree with the Smirnov Commission's transfer of all the settlements along the [right bank of the] Terek to the control of the GSSR first of all because this contradicts the will of the population, which categorically protests against this transfer. Regarding the village Bekovich (Kizliarskoe) in particular, whose Kumyk population does not wish to transfer to the administrative jurisdiction of the GSSR, this would be a violation of the rights of a national minority.⁹³

Moreover, Odintsov determined that transferring these settler villages would be economically damaging to both Kabarda and the villages. In determining the borders of the Kurp region, Odintsov ultimately based his determinations on economic expediency and the national principle. Odintsov only sanctioned the transfer to the GASSR of several small Ingush homesteads (contemporary Kusovo and Keskem/Khurikau in the Mozdok

⁹² Ibid., 32-47.

⁹³ Ibid., 38 ob.

corridor) immediately bordering the GASSR's Ingush District, ruling that "all of the villages above the Terek [e.g. Kizliarskoe, Gnadenburg, Razdol'noe and Sukhotskii] remain within the administrative jurisdiction of the Kabardino-Balkar AO and retain the necessary land allotments according to local conditions."⁹⁴

The relatively peaceful and essentially symbiotic relations that developed between Balkars, Kabardians, Cossacks and other settlers over the *longue durée* of Russian rule meant that, during the Russian Civil War and the establishment of Soviet power, relative inter-communal peace reigned in Kabarda. By contrast, given the absence of symbiotic relations elsewhere in the region, ethnicized warfare, fueled by land disputes and colonial animosities, raged along its borders, spilling over into Kabarda from time to time. To be sure, conflicts sporadically broke out between Kabardians and Cossacks on the basis of cultural animosities and misunderstandings. However, these conflicts usually occurred between Kabardians and Cossacks or other Slavic populations outside the borders of Kabarda, for example when Kabardians, poorly conversant in Russian, would travel to Russian market towns to sell cattle or purchase essential goods.⁹⁵ The historic colonial-era legacies that contributed to the relative inter-communal peace in Kabarda in the 1920s seem to have lasted through the Soviet period. Though tragically falling into a spate of religious violence in recent years, post-Soviet Kabardino-Balkaria has stood out from many other parts of the Caucasus for its lack of ethnic violence, despite high surface

⁹⁴ Ibid., 39 ob.

⁹⁵ For a long list of incidences of disputes between Kabardians and Cossacks in market towns outside the borders of Kabardino-Balkaria see TsGA KBR 2/1/156 (1924-1925): 28-31; 61-69; and 83-141.

tensions between Kabardians and Balkars over land issues. Among the Cossacks of the North Caucasus, experiencing their own national rebirth along with the indigenous ethnicities of the region, tensions today are among the lowest between the Cossacks and titular ethnicities of Kabardino-Balkaria.

The Struggle for Lesken: 1920-1926

The conflict between Kabarda and North Ossetia over the status of the village of Lesken (Khaevo) stands out as one of the most divisive and enduring disputes of this period of irredentist strife. The six-year conflict over this Ossetian village located within the historical borders of Kabarda witnessed political polarization among residents, armed clashes, persecution of villagers, and mass arrests. An examination of land and border conflicts at the local level through the case study of Lesken provides important insights into the role of nationality in the North Caucasus, the effects of Soviet nationality policies, and, more generally, processes of nation-building and social engineering in the twentieth century. Finally, it bears mentioning that while the Lesken affair left a substantial archival footprint, these sources do not provide a complete behind-the-scenes view of policymaking in Moscow. Therefore, the exact motivations and intentions of VTsIK decisions and the activities of the GPU (secret police) described below, of necessity, appear arcane at times.

During the revolution and civil-war years Lesken remained within the borders of Kabarda as part of Nalchik Okrug. Indeed, most of Lesken's Ossetian peasants fought arm-in-arm with their Kabardian and Balkar neighbors against Denikin's White Army

and their local supporters, the Kabardian military aristocracy, during the Red counter-offensive in late 1919 and early 1920.⁹⁶ The seeming unity of the people of Lesken in their struggle against White rule belied the deep socio-economic divisions within the village. In May 1920, shortly after the Red Army restored Soviet power in the region, the poorer residents of the upper quarter successfully used the recently introduced principle of national autonomy and the emerging territorial disputes to their advantage. The residents of upper Lesken banded together and successfully petitioned the Terek Oblast government to transfer Lesken to the jurisdiction of their titular nation, “Ossetia.” By transferring to Ossetian jurisdiction Lesken’s landless upper-quarter residents hoped that they would be rewarded for their support by the Ossetian administration during land redistribution. On January 2, 1921, the residents of Lesken’s lower quarter, realizing that a shift to Ossetian jurisdiction meant their loss of power within the village, banded together and petitioned for (re)incorporation back into the Nalchik (Kabardian) District.⁹⁷ This marked the beginning of a seemingly irreconcilable division of Lesken between supporters of Kabarda (the lower quarter) and supporters of North Ossetia (the upper quarter). This also marked the transformation of an intra-village power struggle into a veritable border war between two North Caucasian autonomous territories.

Officially, the lower-quarter supporters based their “draw toward Kabarda” (*tiagotenie k Kabarde*) on economic and geographic ties.⁹⁸ First, they argued that the

⁹⁶ See for example, “14 dekabria 1919 g.—Raport nachal’nika belogvardeiskoi strazhi Kabardinskogo Okruga o proisshedshe mezhdu bol’shevikami-partizanami i belogvardeiskim otriadom v raione selenii Kaisyn-Anzorovo, Lesken i Novyi Uruk,” in *Za vlast’ soveto*, 204-05.

⁹⁷ GARF 1318/1/51 (1923): 268-70

⁹⁸ Tsentr Dokumentatsii Noveishei Istorii Kabardino-Balkarskoi Respubliki (TsDNI KBR) P-1/1/21 (1924): 21-34.

close proximity and accessibility of Nalchik (Kabarda's administrative center) compared to Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia's center) made Kabardino-Balkaria better able to administer and develop Lesken. Second, having lived in Lesken for 45 to 50 years, they claimed that important economic and familial ties had developed between Kabardians and the Ossetians of Lesken; whereas, the GASSR [i.e. North Ossetia] had "not done anything positive" for Lesken.⁹⁹ Unofficially, in a reflection of the importance of the micro to understand larger social and political processes in Soviet history, questions of power and feuds within the village provided much greater motivation for each side in the dispute. A September 1923 report from I. Smirnov's VTsIK Commission for the Resolution of Disputes between the GASSR and the Kabardino-Balkar AO enumerated the following unofficial motives for some villagers' support of Kabarda: 1) that the GASSR could "in no way allot them with the amount of land they hoped to receive from the K[abardino-Balkar Autonomous] Oblast"; 2) that many of the "older industrious, kulak residents of Lesken had established strong economic ties [with Kabarda] in the form of homes in Nalchik"; 3) that the Karaev family, representing sixty households in the lower quarter, had blood enemies (*krovniki*) in the upper quarter; and 4) that many were drawn to Muslim Kabardians as their coreligionists, while most Ossetians were Orthodox. According to the Smirnov Commission report, this final religious motive was "the most important and extremely serious."¹⁰⁰ In addition to these motives was the equally important question of village land use. The original settlers of Lesken, the residents of the lower quarter, did not want the village's best allotments to the north, land

⁹⁹ GARF 1318/1/51 (1923): 268-70

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

that they had brought under the plow half a century earlier, redistributed among the recent arrivals of the upper quarter. This was a much thornier issue for the Lower Leskenites to maneuver given the Soviet state's support for land equalization and class war in the village.

The motives of North Ossetia's supporters were more transparent and, ultimately, more amenable to Soviet ideology. The upper quarter residents argued that the struggle between the upper and lower quarters was a clear-cut case of class war.¹⁰¹ They argued that the supporters of Kabarda were former White Army supporters and representatives of the exploiting classes—Kulaks and members of the Muslim clergy—who had brainwashed other villagers into following them. In addition to describing numerous cases of exploitation of the Lesken poor by leaders of the lower quarter, in one of their many appeals to Moscow the upper Lesken petitioners provided brief biographical sketches of 36 leaders of the lower quarter. The petitioners described these “class enemies” of the Lesken poor as “former landowners and speculators,” “horse and cattle thieves,” “tax evaders,” “rich mullahs” and “former tsarist administrators.”¹⁰² The land-starved residents of upper Lesken demanded the immediate and equal redistribution of Lesken's entire land allotment and, citing Soviet-supported principles of national self-determination, the right to join with their co-ethnics as part of an autonomous North Ossetia.¹⁰³ While the land question was the primary factor driving the residents of upper Lesken to insist upon inclusion within North Ossetia, there is no reason to doubt the

¹⁰¹ GARF 1235/140/190 (1925): 42.

¹⁰² RGASPI 65/1/110 (1923): 91-92.

¹⁰³ GARF 1235/140/190 (1925): 41-42.

sincerity of the national component of their argument. Unlike the residents of the lower quarter, in the years before and after the 1917, the recent immigrants to Lesken's upper quarter maintained close ties and continued to identify with their homeland of Digora in North Ossetia.¹⁰⁴

Kabardino-Balkaria's leaders initiated active attempts to reincorporate Lesken into their jurisdiction after the VTsIK issued a decree on November 2, 1922, stating that the Kabardino-Balkar AO was "to be left within its existing borders." This decree was a victory for Kabarda because it represented a rejection by the central authorities of further demands by the GASSR (Ingushetia and North Ossetia) to large amounts of territory in Lesser Kabarda. However, the ambiguity of the decree's phrasing also created an opportunity for Kabardian officials to undo what they perceived as past injustices by reclaiming territory recently incorporated into neighboring autonomous regions. Kabardian leaders interpreted Kabarda's "existing borders" to mean the borders of the former Nalchik District. This interpretation allowed Kabardian leaders to reclaim villages, such as Lesken, that were formerly under Kabardian jurisdiction but not listed on the September 1, 1921 Decree "On the Separation of Kabarda from the GASSR."¹⁰⁵ The leaders of the GASSR, on the other hand, interpreted "existing borders" to mean precisely those borders formed by the villages listed in the September 1 Decree. Kabarda's representatives retorted that the September 1 Decree, rather than specifying new borders of Kabarda, separated the Kabardian District from the GASSR and elevated

¹⁰⁴ GARF 1318/1/51 (1923): 270.

¹⁰⁵ "1 sentiabria 1921 g.—Vypiska iz protokola zasedaniia prezidiuma Vserossiiskogo Tsentral'nogo Iсполnitel'nogo Komiteta Sovetov o vydelenii Kabardy iz sostava Gorskoi Avtonomnoi Respubliki," in *Za vlast' sovetov*, 438-39.

it to the status of an autonomous oblast. Since the Kabardian and Balkar District were officially formed out of the northern and southern halves of tsarist-era Nalchik District, the Kabardino-Balkar AO should, they argued, be understood as the former Nalchik Okrug. As usual Moscow formed several committees to examine this dispute and clarify (*utochnit'*) the borders—ultimately, the conflicts hinged on a clarification from Moscow—the imperial “referee”—over the exact meaning of Kabardino-Balkaria’s “existing borders.”¹⁰⁶

While these commissions slowly went about their work, the situation in Lesken heated up as Kabardino-Balkaria’s leaders set about forcibly (re)establishing control over the border villages. On March 20, 1923, the Kabardino-Balkar Central Executive Committee (TsIK) issued “Order Number 24,” officially declaring Lesken’s administrative subordination to Kabardino-Balkaria’s Urvan District. The next day Urvan District Executive Committee ordered the heads of the Lesken and Novyi Uruk village executive committees and their secretaries to assemble for “the removal of [GASSR] administrative documents and the dissemination of official directives.”¹⁰⁷ In late March the Kabardino-Balkar TsIK, anticipating resistance for the supporters of the GASSR, sent in armed squadrons to Lesken and installed a new revolutionary committee in the village, forming a local governing authority that was subordinated to the authority of Kabardino-Balkaria. This marked the beginning of an anarchic period of dual power in Lesken during which two Revkoms, one subordinate to KBAO and the other subordinate to the GASSR (later North Ossetia), existed simultaneously in different quarters of the village.

¹⁰⁶ GARF 5201/2/129 (1923): 4.

¹⁰⁷ A. Karmov, 117.

It remained unclear for many villagers which Revkom they should answer to. Local supporters of Kabardino-Balkaria rallied around the Revkom in the lower quarter, while supporters of North Ossetia rallied around the Revkom in the upper quarter.

On August 17, 1923, the GASSR sent in a sixty-man militia force to back up its claims to jurisdiction over the village. According to reports from lower quarter supporters of Kabarda, the GASSR militia, having temporarily expelled Kabarda's forces, surrounded the village and persecuted (i.e. arrested and interrogated) supporters of Kabarda who had not fled with the Kabardino-Balkar militia to neighboring Kabardian villages.¹⁰⁸ This clash initiated an escalating pattern of sporadic fighting between the two armed camps, each side enjoying only temporary victories and suffering significant casualties. Central and regional authorities initially proved incapable of halting the conflict. In a secret-police report from September 22 to Genrikh Iagoda, then second vice-chair of the GPU, vice-chair of the South-East Division of the GPU, Andreev declared:

Clashes have occurred between Kabarda and the Mountaineer Republic over the unresolved question of Lesken. There are casualties on both sides. The situation has become extremely tense. The South-East [Party] Bureau and I are taking measures [to stabilize the situation], but to no avail. Local powers are acting independently...Urgent actions from Moscow are needed.¹⁰⁹

This anarchic situation in which attacks and counter-attacks shifted power between the two sides continued until October 9, when, after suffering losses to the Urvan District Militia and the Kabardino-Balkar NKVD, the GASSR reestablished its Revkom in the

¹⁰⁸RGASPI 65/1/110 (1923): 46-47, 141.

¹⁰⁹GARF 1235/121/77 (1923): 139.

village.¹¹⁰ At this point each side seems to have tacitly agreed to a temporary solution: an administratively divided village. Between October 1923 and June 1925, two local governments in the form of *revkoms* existed in Lesken—one, in the lower quarter, wielded authority on behalf of Kabardino-Balkaria and another, in the upper quarter, governed on behalf of the GASSR/North Ossetia.¹¹¹

While confrontations and clashes periodically occurred during this period of dual power, the two sides now waged their war more with words than with guns. In addition to promising land to their supporters, representatives of Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia sought to intimidate villagers into recognizing their power in the village. For example, accounts from villagers describe how in 1923 government representatives from Kabardino-Balkaria, Khabala Beslancev and Zarakush Midov, threatened North Ossetia's supporters with forced deportation if they did not switch sides in the conflict.¹¹² The two village factions sent delegations of elected representatives to Rostov-on-Don and Moscow to lobby and argue their cases before regional and central authorities.¹¹³ Meanwhile, the leaders of Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia attempted to influence the findings of several commissions sent to make recommendations on Lesken and other land disputes. These tactics led to a series of contradictory decrees issued at different levels of the Soviet state apparatus. On September 14, 1923, regional Party secretary Nikolai Gikalo issued a decree calling for the GASSR to disperse its Revkom and for Lesken to be temporarily placed under Kabardino-Balkar jurisdiction. On June 21, 1924,

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 140.

¹¹¹ TsDNIKBR P-1/1/18 (1924): 28.

¹¹² GARF 1235/119/36 (1922-26): 26.

¹¹³ TsDNI KBR P-1/1/12 (1923) 4.

the VTsIK decreed the permanent transfer of Lesken and its land allotments to North Ossetia. After protesting this decree, Kabardino-Balkaria and its supporters, modified their demands and petitioned for the permanent division of Lesken between the two autonomous oblasts, with the land allotment of the lower quarter going to Kabardino-Balkaria. Responding to this new set of demands and doubting the efficacy of transferring control of Lesken entirely to North Ossetia, on October 21 the VTsIK ordered the North Caucasus Regional Executive Committee (*Kraiispolkom*) to form a commission “to examine the possibility of administratively delimiting Lesken in accordance with the desire of one or the other side.” Citing the recommendations of this commission, on November 27, 1924, the North Caucasus Kraiispolkom officially divided Lesken into two parts “given the impossibility of normal cohabitation of both parts of the village Lesken within the North Ossetian AO.”¹¹⁴ Receiving approval at various levels of the Soviet administrative hierarchy, this latest decree initially seemed to be a permanent solution to the Lesken question. Then, quite unexpectedly, on February 23, 1925, the VTsIK issued a new decree cancelling all previous decrees on the Lesken question, transferring the village permanently back to North Ossetia, calling for immediate land reform in the village, and promising land to those who wished to resettle to Kabardino-Balkaria, provided they did so over the course of one year.¹¹⁵

Despite this latest decree of February 23, the residents of the lower quarter disregarded the directives from Moscow, retained their *revkom* and divided their coveted land allotment exclusively among lower-quarter supporters of Kabarda. This move

¹¹⁴ GARF 1235/140/190 (1923): 125- 26.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

provoked a new round of clashes between the upper and lower quarters. With spring planting season well under way, in early May the residents of the upper quarter invaded the lower quarter's fields with hoes and plows in an attempt to forcibly carry out the decree.¹¹⁶ On May 15, the VTsIK in Moscow, losing patience with the Lesken question, gave the North Caucasus regional authorities free reign to reexamine the question and ordered them to put an end to the Lesken question once and for all.¹¹⁷ The North Caucasus *Kraiispolkom* responded vigorously to these fresh clashes. On May 28, the regional authorities confirmed the irrevocability of the February 23 decree and called for the following measures: 1) the February 23 Decree was to be read aloud at a village assembly meeting by a member of the North Ossetian Central Executive Committee and the two quarters commanded to stop all conflicts over the question; 2) the GPU was ordered to arrest the "most malicious leaders who instigate the population again North Ossetia"; 3) the two Revkoms were to be immediately disbanded and elections to a new village Soviet were to be held; 4) land redistribution was to be carried out by a special commission; 5) all villagers were ordered to not encumber efforts by lower quarters residents to resettle in Kabardino-Balkaria; 6) finally, all of these measures were to be carried out by the beginning of June.¹¹⁸

On June 20, these decrees still unfulfilled, the North Caucasus GPU and North Ossetian militia invaded Lesken with six machine guns and 150 armed horsemen; without the aid of the Kabardino-Balkar militia which the GPU prevented from intervening, this

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 29.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 20

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 48.

was lower Lesken's last stand and the end of dual power in the village.¹¹⁹ According to a GPU report on the operation, "after being disarmed, the population of lower Lesken subordinated to North Ossetian power. Twelve activists from lower Lesken escaped into the forest. Three were wounded and one killed...The problem ha[d] been liquidated. Complete calm reign[ed] in Lesken."¹²⁰ In the wake of the invasion, the North Ossetian militia arrested 21 pro-Kabarda local leaders and many lower Lesken residents fled to neighboring Kabardian villages for fear of reprisals.¹²¹ Reports indicate that leaders of upper Lesken persecuted the lower Leskenites remaining in the village, forcing them to sign statements disavowing their support for Kabarda.¹²² One of the lower Lesken leaders who managed to escape, Dris Karaev, fled to Moscow to appeal to Aleksei Rykov, head of the Council of People's Commissars (the highest executive branch of the Soviet government). However, the GPU informed Rykov that Karaev was wanted by North Ossetia's authorities for disturbances in Lesken. Rykov had Karaev arrested and sent to prison in Vladikavkaz.¹²³

In late 1925, Kabardino-Balkaria's leaders and remaining supporters among the Lesken villagers made an abortive final attempt in late 1925 to secure some of Lesken's village allotments. After the dispersal of the lower Lesken Revkom, more contradictory and unclear allowed Kabardino-Balkaria and its remaining supporters to make this final attempt on Lesken's village allotments. Faced with the prospect of having to provide land

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 52.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 80.

¹²¹ Ibid., 51.

¹²² Ibid., 72.

¹²³ Throughout the Lesken affair the GPU was clearly Moscow's only source of reliable information on the ground and the only force that Moscow could rely on to do its bidding in the region. The exact role of GPU, however, cannot be determined with any certainty given the dearth of sources.

to the 197 lower quarter households (about 1,300 people) registered for resettlement to Kabarda,¹²⁴ Kabardino-Balkaria's leaders refused to resettle their Lesken supporters within the borders of Kabardino-Balkaria "owing to the absence of free land reserves."¹²⁵ However, on October 26, new hope emerged for the lower Lesken cause when two different branches of the Soviet government issued contradictory decrees. The VTsIK in Moscow issued a decree calling for residents of lower Lesken to be resettled within the borders of the Kabardino-Balkar AO, while the North Caucasus regional government, responding to petitions from lower quarter representatives, issued a decree calling for a "commission to examine the possibility of annexing lands from the Lesken allotment to the Kabardino-Balkar AO for the resettlement of Kabarda supporters."¹²⁶ The ambiguity created by these contradictory decrees led to a situation whereby Kabardino-Balkaria's leaders essentially argued that they would only resettle residents of lower Lesken if the Soviet government transferred Lesken's border land allotments (i.e. the coveted plots formerly belonging to lower Lesken) to Kabardino-Balkaria. In other words, the demands of the Kabardino-Balkar government and its Lesken supporters had not changed much. While reconciled to the fact that annexing all or part of the village to Kabardino-Balkaria was now impossible, they stood firm on the issue of their land allotment, the issue around which the entire Lesken question revolved. Their goal was now to have their land annexed by Kabardino-Balkaria and to resettle their homes on this land, forming a new village, Lower Lesken.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Ibid., 105.

¹²⁵ GARF 3316/58/49 (1925): 68.

¹²⁶ GARF 1235/140/190 (1925): 8, 62.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 3.

On December 7, 1925, I. T. Boiar of the People's Commissariat of Land, and chair of the most recent commission sent to Lesken, concluded that "it was definitely possible to divide Lesken's land allotment into two parts and still observe the interests of both quarters" and that "the only possible place to resettle the supporters of Kabarda would be the northern portion of the Lesken allotment."¹²⁸ This seemed to signal a victory for lower Lesken and Kabardino-Balkaria. However, at the last minute, as Boiar made his way back from Lesken to Nalchik to submit his findings, an Ossetian messenger on horseback stopped the commission and presented them with a VTsIK decree from November 30. With this decree the VTsIK reaffirmed its October 26 order to resettle lower quarter residents within the borders of Kabardino-Balkaria and overruled the North Caucasus regional government's formation of a commission on the division of Lesken's land.¹²⁹ Moscow had stripped the Boiar Commission of its authority before it had even begun its work.

Despite a new round of appeals from the leaders of the lower quarter, Moscow's decision was final; the upper quarter had won the battle for Lesken. By late 1925 and early 1926 Kabardino-Balkaria's leaders gave up hope of retaining any of Lesken's land and most of the original supporters of Kabarda had reluctantly resigned themselves to life in North Ossetia. The Kabardino-Balkar authorities ultimately facilitated the resettlement of only about 20 to 25 households. The Kabardino-Balkar TsIK allotted plots to 15 lower Lesken households in the nearby Kabardian village of Argudan in June 1926.¹³⁰ While

¹²⁸ Ibid., 105.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 106.

¹³⁰ GARF 1235/104/981 (1926): 18.

this marked the end of Lesken's internal struggle, the Lesken-Uruk region remained the scene of violent disputes between North Ossetia and Kabardino-Balkaria over rights to forests and pasturage into 1928.¹³¹

Rustling Cattle on the Mountain Pastures: Kabardino-Karachai Conflict

Bolshevik promises of land redistribution according to the needs of individual ethnic communities raised the Karachai people's hopes that they would regain control over a portion of the mountain pastures (the trans-Malka pastures) that had been at the exclusive disposal of Kabardians since 1860. These Karachai hopes came up against the Kabardian leadership's equally fervent desire to retain Kabarda's mountain pastures and prevent the further erosion of Kabarda's "national" borders. This dynamic produced a cycle of Kabardino-Karachai violence with the ethnically mixed mountain aul of Khasaut as its focal point. At its peak in 1921, this conflict led Moscow to send Red Army peacekeeping forces to the disputed mountain territory.

The division of the Kabardian and Karachai peoples between Terek and Kuban Oblasts in 1860, and subsequent legislation giving Kabardians (and eventually Balkars as well) exclusive usage rights to the trans-Malka pastures, forced the Karachai, whose permanent settlements were located to the west of the pastures on the other side of the administrative border, to rent vital pastures from Kabardians. In the centuries before Russian conquest, the Kabardian princes' control of the mountain pastures enabled them

¹³¹ TsDNIKBR P-25/1/85 (1928): 28-29. The most violent clashes in the years were between Balkar and Digorian-Ossetian shepherds over pasturage rights along the Khazni-Don River, on the border between the two autonomous oblasts. See GARF 1235/119/36 (1923-1928).

to collect tribute from the Karachai, who needed access to these pastures to maintain their stockbreeding economy. Ermolov's conquest of Kabarda in the 1820s cut off Kabarda's access to these pastures and allowed the Karachai to freely use its share of the mountain pastures up to the left bank of the Malka (which Kabardians were forbidden to cross). From 1845 on, the Kabardians gradually reasserted their rights to the mountain pastures beyond the Malka, coming into sporadic conflict with Karachai in the process. The land reforms in the 1860s gave the Kabardians usage rights to vast mountain pastures along the Malka and Kichmalka rivers as far west as the Eshkakon River. After regaining control of the trans-Malka pastures, in 1869, the Kabardians reasserted some of their economic control over their Karachai neighbors by renting out as much as 90,000 *desiatins* (243,000 acres) of excess pasturage to Karachai shepherds. Kabardians made a hefty profit by renting out pastures, for which they paid a nominal ten-kopek-per-*desiatina* fee to the Kabardian Public Treasury (a tax fund for local public-works, infrastructure, and education initiatives and projects), for as much as five rubles per *desiatina* for grazing land and up to 15 rubles per *desiatina* of hayfield.¹³² By 1917, about 20,000 Karachai, or almost a third of the total Karachai population, drove their cattle to rented pastures on Kabardian and Balkar territory in Terek Oblast's Nalchik District during the summer.¹³³

The Karachai never forgot that they had once controlled the Kabardian mountain pastures and, when the revolution broke out and talk of land reform spread to their

¹³² GARF 1235/121/77: 42.

¹³³ RGASPI 558/1/5629: 30.

mountain auls, they saw the recovery of these pastures as the principle means to their economic rebirth. As soon as Soviet power spread to the North Caucasus, Karachai's pro-Bolshevik elites began to lobby for control of the portion of mountain pastures that their people had historically rented from the Kabardians. On February 16, 1918, at the Second Congress of Peoples of the Terek, the first Karachai attempt to raise their land claims failed. The Congress denied the Karachai representation at the congress on procedural grounds because the Karachai people resided in Kuban, rather than Terek Oblast. In late May 1918 a Karachai delegation managed to gain entrance and representation at the Third Congress of the Peoples of the Terek, held in Groznyi, by convincing the Mandate Commission that enough Karachai resided in Terek Oblast (in Khasaut and around Kislovodsk) to warrant having a delegate with voting rights at the Congress.

During the Third Congress' preliminary discussions on the formation of the Emergency Land Commission—the Commission tasked with redistributing land to landless mountaineer communities on a temporary basis until a formal land reform could be carried out—a heated argument erupted between the Karachai delegates, who hoped to be included in the Commission, and the Kabardian delegates, who aimed to prevent this. Arguing that “the Karachai live in Kuban Oblast and have baselessly staked claims to the land of the Kabardians,” the Kabardian fraction protested “the participation of Karachai representatives in the work of the Emergency Land Commission.” The Karachai delegate, Khamzat Golaev, defended the Karachai position, claiming that “the Karachai tribe once resided [in Terek Oblast] until they were pushed into the mountains around Elbrus by Cossacks.” Golaev also argued that since the Kabardians were sharing their land with

local Russian settlers or *inogorodnie*, they should also share their land with the equally-needy Karachai. Golaev pleaded with the Kabardians: “reach out to us, your younger brother, to avoid possible excesses. We have nowhere to turn. Remember this! If you share your land with Russian settlers [*s inogorodnimi*], why then do you not want to share the mountain pastures with us!? If it is because we are foreigners, then why are these other foreigners not deprived of this right as well and why can we not participate in...the Commission?!” As was frequently the result of the work of Land Commissions during this period in the North Caucasus, the Emergency Land Commission ended this land dispute inconclusively with a call to investigate further the actual size of the Karachai population living within Terek Oblast.¹³⁴

Lingering questions over the Karachai people’s right to representation based on their population size within Terek Oblast ultimately prevented the Emergency Land Commission from examining the land needs of the Karachai, and the Commission’s December 5, 1918, resolution called for redistribution of Kabardian land to Balkars but not Karachai.¹³⁵ The collapse of Soviet power and the period of White-Army rule in Terek and Kuban Oblasts during 1919 temporarily ended discussions of the Karachai-Kabardian land dispute—Denikin’s government was committed to defending the traditional order and preserving or restoring the land rights of Cossacks, native nobles (of all local ethnicities), and other large landowners in the region.

¹³⁴ “Večernee zasedanie 25 maia,” in *S’ezdy narodov Tereka*, Vol 1, 288-90.

¹³⁵ “Rezoliutsiia s’ezda po agrarnomu voprosu,” 241.

In May 1920, two months after the restoration of Soviet rule, the summer transhumance to the mountain pastures brought the Karachai-Kabardian land dispute to the fore. A cycle of armed clashes and cattle thieving erupted as Karachai stockbreeders drove their cattle onto Kabardian controlled pastures on the left bank of the Malka.¹³⁶ On May 28, the *Revkom* of Terek Oblast issued the Order on the Resolution of the Land Dispute between the Karachai and Kabardians, giving authority to the Terek Oblast Land Department to investigate the situation and issue a ruling on the dispute pasture lands.¹³⁷ On July 20, after examining the disputed territory and meeting with representatives of both sides (despite Kabardian attempts to delay these meetings), Chairman of the Terek Land Department and professional land surveyor (a Russian), M.V. Dergachev, reported his findings to the Soviet authorities of Terek Oblast. Dergachev's report did not bode well for the Kabardian leaderships' goal of retaining the trans-Malka mountain pastures. Dergachev reported that the Kabardians were currently incapable of fully utilizing all of their pastures, the Karachai had rented this land from Kabardians, and they were in need of these pastures because there were insufficient pastures for their needs in Kuban Oblast. Based on these findings, Dergachev concluded that "it would be expedient to allow the Karachai to use the mountain pastures this summer season." Two factors led the Dergachev Commission to issue only a temporary ruling on the Karachai-Kabardian land dispute. First, because of limitations on its jurisdiction, the Commission was unable to fully examine the amount of land that the Karachai had within Kuban Oblast and how

¹³⁶ Artur Kazharov, "Administrativno-territorial'noe razmezhivanie Kabardy i Karachaia," *Istoricheskii vestnik Kabardino-Balkarskoi Respublikanskoi Instituta Gumanitarnykh Issledovaniï*, no. 5 (2006): 55.

¹³⁷ RGASPI: 558/1/5629: 30

much more they need. Second, Dergachev understood the potential for an escalation of the conflict and sought to defer responsibility for a permanent resolution to a future commission, one with a higher-level sanction and broader mandate. Indeed, Dergachev's belief that the dispute should be resolved "extremely carefully for political reasons" was only enhanced by both sides threatening armed insurrection should the land disputes be resolved against their interests.¹³⁸

Khasaut: The Key to the Mountain Pastures

As the Kabardian and Karachai leaders struggled for what they viewed as the preservation or reassertion of their peoples' national territories, the majority-Karachai Khasaut, at the center of the disputed territory, became embroiled in a local dispute for access to surrounding farmland and pastures. The village of Khasaut would become an important pawn in Karachai's plans for gaining control of the mountain pastures. The Karachai of Khasaut, historically dissatisfied with the poor quality of the land that the tsarist state had assigned to them,¹³⁹ felt that the Kabardian-led local Soviet government was neglecting their interests, particularly in terms of land redistribution.¹⁴⁰ Seeing the expansion of Kabardian aul allotments on account of expropriated private land (from the Kabardian nobility), the residents of Khasaut also hoped for an increase in farmland and pastures. On March 30, 1920, the Khasaut village assembly requested "that [either] Soviet power in Nalchik District allot their village with pastures and arable land from the district's Kabardian land allotments" or that "Soviet power transfer their village from the

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Gaibov, 49-53.

¹⁴⁰ Kazharov, "Administrativno-territorial'noe razmezhivanie", 53-55.

jurisdiction of Nalchik District to Piatigorsk District.”¹⁴¹ Tensions over Khasaut escalated after May 12, when a conflict broke out between a Kabardian patrol on the mountain pastures and a group of Khasaut villagers serving as guides for the patrol. Khasaut villagers killed several Kabardians in the incident. Rumor spread that the Kabardian militia was sending a force of 4,000 to punish Khasaut. At the same time, in the nearest village, the Kabardian aul Karmovo (Kamennomostskii) on the Malka, which, incidentally, was involved in a land dispute with Khasaut, rumor spread that the Karachai were sending in their militia.¹⁴² Judging by the sources, these rumors of paramilitary mobilizations were unsubstantiated. Nevertheless, in the lead up to the formation of the Dergachev Commission, tensions over Khasaut helped fuel the already fierce dispute between Kabarda and Karachai over the trans-Malka mountain pastures.

The Dergachev Commission’s July 20 ruling gave the Karachai the right to use trans-Malka mountain pastures for the remaining month of their summer pasture season.¹⁴³ The end of the summer transhumance brought a temporary de-escalation of the Karachai-Kabardian conflict. Meanwhile, the Karachai leadership continued to seek a means to gain permanent control over the disputed mountain pastures.

With the formation of the GASSR in January 1921, the Karachai, for the first time since the establishment of Russian rule in the central Caucasus, found themselves in a common administrative unit with the mountaineers of the Terek region. Knowing that much like them, the Ossetian, Balkar, and Ingush leaders hoped to gain much needed land

¹⁴¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 53

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁴³ RGASPI: 558/1/5629: 30

for their peoples at the expense of Kabarda, this new administrative arrangement pleased the Karachai leadership. The majority of the GASSR's leaders were sympathetic to the plight of the Karachai. Initial decrees indicating the territorial division of the GASSR seemed to signal Karachai success in their efforts to annex the trans-Malka pastures. A November 1920 decree cited Khasaut in a list of villages to be included within the borders of the future Karachai District of the GASSR. In typically vague fashion, the VTsIK decree on the formation of the GASSR included "the western portion of the former Nalchik District" within the Republic's newly formed Karachai District.¹⁴⁴

In the summer of 1921, ethno-territorial disputes between Kabarda and most of the other constituent members of the GASSR intensified as Kabardian leaders prepared to remove Kabarda from the fledgling Autonomous Republic and form an Autonomous Oblast for the Kabardian people. In addition to tensions between Kabardians and Ossetians along Kabarda's eastern border in the Urukhs-Lesken valley, in the west, conflict also erupted on the mountain pastures with renewed vigor. This time, Kabardian shepherds and militiamen clashed with Karachai and Balkar shepherds and fighters, in separate incidents, as each group staked claim to pastures beyond the Malka. In early July, Karachai shepherds, backed by their militia on horseback, chased Kabardian shepherds east from the mountain pastures down to the Zolka pastures in the foothills and stealing cattle in the process. On July 19, the head of the Kabardian District Militia, Mikhail Tkachenko (a Ukrainian), backed by 150 armed Kabardian horsemen, ordered

¹⁴⁴ "Postanovlenie Vserossiiskoi Tsentral'nogo Iсполnitel'nogo Komiteta ob Obrazovanii Avtonomnoi Gorskoi Sovetskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki," in *Dokumenty po istorii bor'by za Sovetskuiu vlast'*, 623-24.

the Kabardian shepherds to reoccupy the mountain pastures under their protection.¹⁴⁵ After pushing back the Karachai, the Kabardian militia established block-posts along the mountain passes and river crossings onto the trans-Malka pastures under the pretext of “definitively closing off the mountain pastures to outlaws.”¹⁴⁶ On August 16, after several weeks of failed attempts to reach a solution to the conflict at meetings in Kislovodsk, Karachai armies invaded the mountain pastures again and occupied hayfields. In order to avoid an all-out war between Kabarda and Karachai, Moscow dispatched a Red Army peacekeeping mission from the North Caucasus Military District. Headed by Nikolai Kuibyshev, Commander of the Second Caucasus Corps, and supervised by Kliment Voroshilov, then the Commander of the North Caucasus Military District. The Commission established a temporary ceasefire line and dispatched a Red Army unit to ensure its observance by the two sides. The Red Army forbade Kabardians and Karachai to cross the established border, which would be in effect until the VTsIK Commission, chaired by V.S. Muromtsev, finished its work and issued what was supposed to be a definitive ruling on the borders between Kabarda and the GASSR.¹⁴⁷

Between September 1921 and January 1922, Karachai’s Bolshevik leaders, Umar Aliev and Islam Khubiev-Karachaily, began a forceful campaign aimed at shoring up support from officials in Moscow and Rostov-on-Don for the Karachai position in the land dispute with Kabarda. In numerous articles, declarations, and official memoranda,

¹⁴⁵ TsGA KBR 2/1/7 (1921-1922): 2-3.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁴⁷ A. Kazharov, “Administrativno-Territorial’noe razmezhivanie”, 49-50.

Aliev and Karachaily launched a two-pronged attack on the Kabardian leadership's claims to all of the mountain pastures.

First, Aliev and Khubiev-Karachaily—a teacher and a journalist before the revolution—crafted brief histories depicting the Karachai people as the victims of centuries of Kabardian oppression enabled, in its most recent phase, by a close relationship between the Kabardian nobility and the tsarist administration. According to these histories, the tsarist administration gave Karachai's mountain pastures to Kabarda's princes as a reward for their loyalty. The Karachai leadership hoped to use anti-tsarist sentiment to their advantage by labeling their people as resisters to colonization and depicting the Kabardians as collaborators. In a September 1921 memorandum to the VTsIK Statistical Bureau, Aliev claimed: "Kabarda voluntarily joined Russia and helped it conquer other mountain tribes, but Karachai resisted and was the last of the mountaineer peoples to be conquered (sic)...the princes of Kabarda not only did not lose land by joining the autocracy, to the contrary, they were gifted land from other mountaineer peoples (sic!)."¹⁴⁸ In a September 23 proclamation (*vozzvanie*) "to the laboring people of Karachai," Aliev argued that the Karachai had been under "the triple oppression of the tsarism, the Cossack whip, and Kabardian princes." Claiming that the Kabardians are up to their same old tricks, Aliev continued, "petty bourgeois Kabardian elements are in Moscow hoping that the government, which placated loyal Kabardian

¹⁴⁸ GARF 1318/1/114 (1921-1923): 106-08.

princes under tsarist rule against the interests of the free Karachai shepherds...now in the form of workers-peasant power, will still placate them.”¹⁴⁹

The second prong of the Karachai leadership’s campaign was economic. They argued that the Kabardians were a predominantly agrarian people and therefore, unlike the stockbreeding Karachai, had no need for their vast mountain pastures; whereas, the Karachai were desperate for more pasturage on which to practice their sole economic activity. According to Karachaily’s January 31 1922 article in *Zhizn’ natsional’nostei*, the journal of the People’s Commissariat of Nationalities Affairs:

the Kabardian people are a grain-growing people, a people of the plains among whom stockbreeding never played a central economic role and despite Soviet power’s cardinal slogan that the ‘land should go to those who work it,’...a small group of Kabardian comrades have tried to fight for Kabarda’s rights to the disputed pastures, which are completely unnecessary for the laboring Kabardian people and were never under their ownership.¹⁵⁰

Karachaily continued his economic argument by claiming that only small group of Kabardian horse breeders used the mountain pastures. In his concluding remarks, Karachaily demanded that “the reserve mountain pastures, totaling more than 100,000 desiatinas, which are utilized by the laboring Karachai people, must be transferred once and for all to the property of the laboring mountaineers who live and work on them...The definitive...transfer of [the mountain pastures]...is necessary in the interest of saving the mountaineers’ economy from ruin.”¹⁵¹

The Karachai leadership’s propaganda did not achieve the desired result. In their writings, especially those of Umar Aliev, the Karachai leaders veered away from a class-

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 113.

¹⁵⁰ Islam Khubiev-Karachaily, “Kabardino-Karachaevskii vopros,” *Zhizn’ natsional’nostei* 133, no. 4 (1922): 1.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

based, Marxist-internationalist analysis of social relations in the region. Rather, in their condemnation of historic Kabardian oppression of the Karachai, the Karachai leadership tread dangerously close to what the central Soviet leadership could have easily labeled “bourgeois nationalism.” Most notable in this regard is Aliev’s December 1921 Report to Moscow, “On the National Antagonism between Karachai and Kabarda and the Land Question.”¹⁵² Before his appointment as Chair of the Karachai Revkom, Aliev served as the head of the Mountaineer Section of the *Narkomnats* and played a key role in the establishment of Soviet power in the North Caucasus.¹⁵³ One of the most influential and powerful native Bolsheviks from the North Caucasus, Aliev hoped to use his connections in Moscow to his advantage.

Aliev’s Report paints a picture of a long history of Kabardian oppression of the mountaineers of the North Caucasus, especially the Karachai. Aliev makes numerous exaggerated claims regarding Kabarda’s power over the Karachai and, most importantly, he often does not distinguish between the feudal elites and the peasantry. In one characteristic example, Aliev writes, “Kabardians would expel [Karachai] husbands from their homes and sleep with their wives. If a Kabardian placed his hat outside the door of any Karachai home as a sign that he was sleeping with the wife or daughter of the master of the house...then the latter did not have the right to enter his home until the former had picked up his hat.”¹⁵⁴ Rather than gaining the support of the central Soviet leadership, Aliev’s report had the opposite effect. The Soviet leadership began to view to Aliev’s

¹⁵² RGASPI 558/1/5629: 15-25.

¹⁵³ Aliev was also one of the greatest intellectuals and educators among the native Bolsheviks of the North Caucasus. For a biography of Umar Aliev see F.V. Abaeva, *Umar Aliev: prosvetitel'skaia, pedagogicheskaia i obshchestvennaia deiatel'nost'* (Maikop: Adgyeia, 1995).

¹⁵⁴ RGASPI 558/1/5629: 15.

continued presence in Karachai as an impediment to the establishment of order and interethnic accord. Indeed, despite the great importance that historians have traditionally placed on the role of ideology in the functioning of the Soviet state, at least at this early stage, a quest for order structured much of the Soviet state's approach to the North Caucasus. It is likely that Aliev's report played a significant role in his downfall as a political force in the region.¹⁵⁵ In March 1922, several months after his report, the Central Committee transferred Aliev to Party work in southern Dagestan.¹⁵⁶

The Kabardian leadership, not yet sure what effect Aliev and Khubiev-Karachail'y's writings would have in Moscow, took to the pages of *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*, a stage for all-union debate on issues related to nationalities policies, in response to the Karachai leadership's anti-Kabardian campaign. A February 9 article, "Kabarda: Past and Present," sought to dispel claims that Kabardians were collaborators with and beneficiaries of Tsarist rule.¹⁵⁷ The author, M (Zarakush Midov?), claims that "for more than 300 years the Kabardians defended their rights and freedoms, not submitting to the Tsarist regime, but repeatedly raising the banner of rebellion against oppressors who were trying to turn the freedom-loving mountaineers into subjects of the autocratic tsar and his officials."¹⁵⁸ On February 25, the Representative of Kabardino-Balkaria in the VTsIK, N. Nazarov, published a response to Karachail'y's claims that the

¹⁵⁵ Artur Kazharov makes this argument in "U.D. Aliev i nekotorye problemy natsional'no-gosudarstvennogo razvitiia narodov severnogo Kavakaza v nachale 1920 gg." in *Istoricheskii vestnik Kabardino-Balkarskoi Respublikanskoi Instituta Gumanitarnykh Issledovani*, no. 9 (2010): 82.

¹⁵⁶ K. Laipanov and M. Batchaev, *Umar Aliev* (Cherkessk: Karachai-Cherkesskoe otdelenie Staropol'skogo knizhnogo izdatel'stva, 1986), 148.

¹⁵⁷ M., "Kabarda v proshlom i nastoiashchem," *Zhinz' natsional'nostei* 134, no. 3 (1922): 2.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

trans-Malka pastures were not necessary for the Kabardian economy.¹⁵⁹ Nazarov took the position that Kabarda's access to the mountain pastures for horse-breeding, in addition to stockbreeding, was vital to the security interests of Soviet Russia. According to Nazarov, "Kabardian horse-breeding is not, as Karachaily claims in his article, the pastime of a few sportsmen; rather it is a highly developed sector of the national economy. For the Red Cavalry, for example, the question of a supply of thousands of excellent horses is extremely important, which is why the People's Commissariat of Land is taking the most serious measures to support the Kabardian Ashabovo horse-farm." Nazarov also argues that Karachai's demand for more pasturage is born out of "the primitive condition of their stockbreeding" and ineffective use of their own land.¹⁶⁰

If the Karachai propaganda campaign met with little success in Moscow, sources indicate that Nikolai Kuibyshev's Red Army peacekeeping forces nonetheless took the Karachai's side in the dispute. In early November, Kuibyshev's forces redistributed Kabardian hayfields and baled hay on the disputed land among Karachai stockbreeders. Despite the end of pasture season and the onset of winter, the Karachai would remain on the pastures to ensure their continued control over them. On November 8, 1921, Betal Kalmykov, Chair of the Kabardian Executive Committee, telegraphed the Regional Party Committee in Rostov-on-Don of Kuibyshev's actions and informed them that "Kabarda is sending an armed militia to cleanse the territory of Kabardian Oblast of Karachai invaders and to maintain order on the border."¹⁶¹ The Kabardian Militia sent a

¹⁵⁹ Nazarov, "Kabardino-Karachaevskii vopros: po povodu stat'i t. Islama Khubieva (Karachaily) v no. 4 'Zhizn' nats'," *Zhizn' natsional'nostei* 136, no. 7 (1922): 3-4.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 3-4.

¹⁶¹ RGASPI 558/1/5629: 5.

force of 200 to the mountain pastures.¹⁶² A week later, on November 16, the Presidium of the Second Kabardian Oblast Party Conference received a telegram describing border clashes over hayfields between Karachai and Kabardians.¹⁶³ In response to this report, the delegates of the Kabardian Party Conference issued the following decree:

Given that Karachai has been a den for counterrevolutionaries since 1918, where both Karachai and Kabardian bandits find refuge, steal cattle...and prevent the Kabardian peasantry from peacefully working their land: 1) Request that Karachai immediately remove their shepherds from Kabardian territory; 2) Strengthen the police force on the border with Karachai with a special-forces detachment; 3) report to higher authorities that the Karachai Executive Committee cannot be deemed to represent the will of the Karachai working people because it has been infiltrated by counterrevolutionaries.¹⁶⁴

On the same day, Stalin, having received a copy of Kalmykov's report on the actions of Kuibyshev's peacekeeping mission, telegraphed Voroshilov, Commander of the North Caucasus Military District, that "Kuibyshev does not have the right to make decisions regarding land redistribution; the center has not given him such authority."¹⁶⁵ Despite Kalmykov's threat that Kabarda was sending in forces to retake disputed territory, according to Voroshilov's December 18 report to Stalin, it appears that only skirmishes took place in November and December.¹⁶⁶

With the neutrality of the peacekeeping mission compromised, the Kabardian leadership prepared for a large-scale assault aimed at expelling all Karachai from the disputed lands. On January 5, 1922, Kabardian Militia chief Tkachenko and a member of the Presidium of the Kabardian Oblast Executive Committee and Civil War hero, Nazir

¹⁶² Ibid., 13.

¹⁶³ TsDNIKBR P-1/1/1 (1921): 6.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 7.

¹⁶⁵ RGASPI 558/1/5629: 6.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 13.

Katkhanov, mobilized horsemen from Kabarda's auls and concentrated these paramilitary forces in Karmovo on the outskirts of the mountain pastures. Tkachenko and Katkhanov planned to disguise these forces as a Red Army detachment and have them remove the Karachai from the disputed territory at gunpoint. Kuibyshev, learning of Kabarda's planned assault, left his headquarters in Kislovodsk to persuade Tkachenko and Katkhanov to pursue peaceful negotiations, showing the Kabardian officials a series of orders obliging both sides to reject violence and seek a resolution of the question through negotiations. Tkachenko and Katkhanov temporarily called off the attack; however, the Kabardian forces gathered in Karmovo were becoming restless and yearned to avenge the Karachai for past grievances, namely the theft of cattle between 1918 and 1920.¹⁶⁷

At 2AM on the night of January 8, the mobilized Kabardian horsemen broke out of their barracks, disarmed the watchmen, and broke into the safe-house where Tkachenko and Katkhanov had stored a large cache of rifles and cartridges, several machines guns, and rocket launcher with several crates of mortars.¹⁶⁸ This force of 600 heavily-armed horsemen advanced upon the Karachai border in early hours of the morning. The Kabardians stole horses and took Karachai prisoners, but the Karachai fought back. There were dozens of dead and wounded on both sides. The next day, Kabardian officials visited the conflict zone in an effort to end the fighting. Meanwhile, the Karachai leadership mobilized their forces for a counterattack against Kabarda. On January 11, in an urgent telegram to Regional Party Bureau in Rostov-on-Don, the Kabardian Oblast Executive Committee reported that "captured Kabardian militiamen

¹⁶⁷ RGASPI 65/1/44: 105.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 18.

had been brutally beheaded by Karachai forces” and requested that “Karachai be ordered to cease the formation of armed detachments with the aim of attacking Kabardian villages.”¹⁶⁹ Stalemate set in over the next several weeks. Having forced the Karachai back from the mountain pastures between the Malka and Kichmalka, the harsh winter conditions on the mountain pastures caused many sick and weary Kabardian militiamen to desert. The remaining 150 militiamen patrolled the border along the Kichmalka, enduring freezing gale-force winds and snow storms.¹⁷⁰ Service in the Karachai campaign became a test of loyalty to the new regime in Soviet Kabarda. The Kabardian leadership purged deserters from local Party and State organs¹⁷¹ and, in future years, service in the campaign, was used (in addition to Red Army service in the Civil War) to evaluate Party members during regular purges.¹⁷²

On January 25, 1922, with Kabarda and Karachai on the verge of a full-scale war as both sides mobilized additional forces, the Revolutionary Military Council (*Revvoensovet*) of the North Caucasus Military District brokered a ceasefire and an emergency meeting in Piatigorsk between representatives from Karachai and Kabarda. The *Revvoensovet* meeting, co-chaired by Voroshilov and fellow Civil-War hero Semen Budennyi, found a temporary solution to the dispute over the mountain pastures. The *Revvoensovet* called for the creation of a neutral zone between the two autonomous oblasts and a military-legal commission to ensure the observance of the neutral zone. The

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 14-15.

¹⁷⁰ TsGA KBR 2/1/7 (1921-1922): 83.

¹⁷¹ For example, on March 30, 1922, in accordance with decree from the Second Kabardian Oblast Party Conference, “On the Purging of the Party Organization of those who Disgraced Themselves in the Karachai Campaign,” the Urvan District Committee expelled 48 Party members for “shamefully fleeing the front.” TsDNIKBR P-1/1/10 (1922): 23.

¹⁷² See, for example, GARF 374/27/912 (1926): 29.

neutral zone included the disputed mountain pastures between the Malka and Kichmalka. The Red Army military-legal commission would administer this territory, regulate the use of its hayfields by Karachai and Kabardian peasants, and ensure that officials and militiamen from Karachai and Kabarda remained outside of the zone.¹⁷³ This neutral zone would remain in effect until the issuance of a ruling, expected later in 1922, on the borders between Kabarda and Karachai by the VTsIK Commission.

As the Kabardino-Karachai conflict evolved over 1921 and early 1922, the strategic importance of the majority-Karachai village of Khasaut became increasingly clear. Given Khasaut's location on the mountain pastures, whoever could establish official jurisdiction over Khasaut would control a large swath of the disputed territory. The Karachai leadership grasped this relationship first and claimed Khasaut as part of the GASSR's Karachai District. The January 20 1921 VTsIK decree on the formation of the GASSR included Khasaut with the Karachai District without any protest from the Kabardian side. However, almost a year later, on January 11, 1922, Kabardian officials protested Karachai attempts to include Khasaut in the future Karachai-Cherkes Autonomous Oblast (Kabarda's exit from the GASSR separated Karachai from the Mountaineer Republic territorially, forcing it to secede and form the Karachai-Cherkes AO with its neighboring trans-Kuban Circassian minority). Karachai representatives included Khasaut in its list of villages to be included in the new KChAO, but protests from Kabardian representatives convinced the *Narkomnats* to appended a footnote to the list reading: "all of the listed villages are approved except Khasaut, the status of which

¹⁷³Kazharov, "Administrativno-territorial'noe razmezhivanie" 52-53.

will remain open until the question is resolved by the VTsIK Dmitriev Commission.” The VTsIK Decree on the Formation of the Karachai-Cherkes AO, issued the following day, did not mention Khasaut.

With the neutral zone in effect, the Dmitriev VTsIK Commission used the rest of the winter and spring of 1922 to examine the question of the borders of Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia, and the GASSR. After a series of delays, largely caused by Kabardian protests over the Commission’s approach to border delimitation with the Balkars (discussed above), on May 30, 1922, the Dmitriev Commission presented its report to the VTsIK Federal Land Commission and on June 10, 1922, the VTsIK adopted a decree demanding a final resolution on the border within two weeks.¹⁷⁴ In the time between the submission of the Dmitriev Commission’s report and the final VTsIK decree, a Kabardian delegation led by Betal Kalmykov travelled to Moscow to lobby for a favorable outcome. On July 19, for example, Kalmykov telegraphed Stalin that the Commission’s project, which called for giving most of the pastures beyond the Malka to the Karachai and Balkars, “would destroy Kabarda economically and politically.”¹⁷⁵ These lobbying efforts bore fruit, perhaps because of Kalmykov’s close relationship with Stalin. The June 22, 1922, VTsIK decree delimited the borders of the Karachai-Cherkes and Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblasts along the Kichmalka River, leaving most of the disputed mountain pastures and Khasaut within the borders of Kabarda.¹⁷⁶ Rather than receiving the nearly 100,000 desiatinas (270,000 acres) that the Karachai leadership

¹⁷⁴ GARF 1235/99/108 (1921-1923): 81-82.

¹⁷⁵ GARF 1318/1/231 (1922): 6.

¹⁷⁶ A. Kazharov, “Voprosy zemlevladiiia,” 137.

demanding, the Karachai-Cherkes AO received 32,500 desiatins (65,000 acres) from Kabarda between the rivers Eshkakon and Kichmalka.¹⁷⁷

As we have seen, in terms of the delimitation of land between Kabardians and Balkars, the June 22 VTsIK decree represented a compromise that largely satisfied the territorial demands of the Kabardian and Balkar leaderships. The Karachai Soviet leadership, however, remained unsatisfied. The Karachai, now led by Kurman Kurdzhiev, continued to demand that the borders of the Autonomous Oblast be extended to the Malka. These trans-Malka pastures were part of a larger puzzle for the Karachai. The Karachai leadership simultaneously petitioned for Cossack land around Kislovodsk from the Terek Governorate (former Terek Oblast less the GASSR) and the Kuban-Black-Sea Governorate.¹⁷⁸ Though never reaching the same level of armed conflict as the Kabardino-Karachai conflict, there were several small skirmishes between Karachai shepherds and Cossack peasants in this area.¹⁷⁹

Meanwhile, despite being satisfied with the rather modest land transfer to Karachai prescribed in the June 22 VTsIK decree, the Kabardian side also protested the decree, demanding that Kabarda be left in its 1917 borders which extended to the Eshkakon. In protesting the VTsIK decree the Kabardian leadership pursued what Kazaharov calls “active defense.” Knowing full well that the Karachai leadership would not cease in its efforts to gain all of the mountain pastures between the Malka and Kichmalka for the Karachai people, the Kabardian leadership “attempt[ed] to show how

¹⁷⁷ TsGA KBR 2/1/70 (1923): 9

¹⁷⁸ GARF: 1235/121/77: 45-47; and GARF 1318/1/231: 335.

¹⁷⁹ N.F. Bugai, *Severnyi Kavkaz. Gosudarstvennoe stroitel'stvo i federativnye otnosheniia: proshloe v nastoiashchem* (Moscow: Grif i K, 2011), 214, 219.

much Kabarda needed the disputed land by acting as if the even mountain pastures were not enough.”¹⁸⁰ “The essence of ‘active defense’,” according to Kazharov, “was the creation of the ‘appearance’ of the need more than was actually needed.”¹⁸¹

The Karachai leadership, similar to the Ossetian leadership in Lesken, hoped to use the Karachai ethnicity of Khasaut’s residents, and their historic land grievances with Kabarda’s administration and neighboring Kabardian auls, to achieve a reversal of the June 22 VTsIK decree. The Karachai leadership mobilized Khasaut’s residents to launch a petition campaign aimed at achieving approval for the annexation of their village to the Karachai-Cherkes AO.

On June 27, 1922, shortly after the VTsIK decree placed their village back under Kabardian jurisdiction, the plenipotentiaries of Khasaut (Tugan Khapaev, Edyk Zhereshtiev, Adil-Girei Isashev) sent a declaration to the Presidium of the VTsIK and Stalin at the *Narkomnats*. This would be the first of many such petitions and declarations. Citing the Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia (articles one through four), the Khasaut representatives requested that “the Presidium of the VTsIK immediately reexamine the decree of the VTsIK Commission on the borders between Karachai and Kabarda and include the aul Khasaut within Karachai.” Khasaut representatives based their request on the following long list of considerations: ever since their aul’s administrative annexation to Kabarda during the tsarist land reforms and delimitation of Kuban and Terek Oblasts in the 1860s, Khasautites suffered from acute lack of land and oppression from their Kabardian neighbors (i.e. they complained that neighboring

¹⁸⁰ Kazharov, “Administrativno-territorial’noe razmezhivanie,” 61.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 62.

Kabardian shepherds would either steal their cows or cut off their cows' tails); Khasaut is situated too far from Kabarda's administrative center, Nalchik; Karachai and Kabardians speak different languages; "national enmity between Karachai and Kabarda" makes it unsafe for Khasaut to remain part of Kabarda; "citizens of Khasaut [the only Karachai village in Kabarda] are an insignificant minority and Kabarda completely ignores its interests;" Khasautites "never lost their connection with the Karachai, with whom they are connected by blood, language, customs, and way of life"; Khasaut had previously been included in the Karachai District of the GASSR; "since the revolution, still more than before, Kabarda committed among the Karachai a series of murders, attacks, and rustling of cattle"; finally, the petitioners argued that "Kabardian reprisals [for siding with Karachai] are inevitable."¹⁸² Similar petitions from Khasaut residents, backed up by requests from the Karachai leadership, continued to flow into the offices of the VTsIK, *Narkomnats*, and Krai-level Party and state organs throughout 1922 and 1923.¹⁸³

It was not difficult for Karachai leadership to mobilize the Karachai of Khasaut; they had long been dissatisfied with their land allotment in Kabarda and had repeatedly looked for ways to leave Kabardian jurisdiction in hopes of gaining more land. Whatever the Khasautites feelings about their Karachai ethnicity, land was clearly more important than ethnicity when it came down to the core issues involved in this dispute. Many of the Khasaut villagers' complaints, particularly in terms of access to land, were justified. Indeed, the residents of Khasaut were understandably upset that the Kabardian authorities

¹⁸² GARF 5677/3/315 (1922-1923): 2-3

¹⁸³ See, for example, *Ibid.*, 4-13 GARF 1318/1/231: 382-383; GARF 1235/99/108 (1921-1923): 38; GARF 1235/119/36: 75; and GARF 1235/119/38: 80-81.

had not expanded Khasaut's allotment on account of recently expropriated private land. In terms of the Khasautites' ethno-national argument (that Khasaut should be transferred to Karachai because its residents are ethnically Karachai and the Karachai and Kabardians have historic and on-going tensions), the veracity of the Karachais' sentiments is more difficult to gauge. To be sure, relations between Khasaut and the Kabardian administration had soured in recent years. Moreover, Khasaut's mainly Karachai population maintained close ties with relatives in Greater Karachai and spoke the Karachai language. However, many of the Karachai of Khasaut were also connected—by familial and economic ties—to Kabarda and Kabardians. Indeed, the Zhereshtievs, the family that established Khasaut, were Kabardian nobles who migrated to Karachai less than a century earlier. Through intermarriage and acculturation, the Zhereshtievs of Khasaut had become Karachai(-icized); yet, they still maintained close contacts with their Kabardian relatives. Indeed, a branch of the Zhereshtievs resided in the neighboring Kabardian aul of Karmovo. At their roots, Khasaut's conflicts with its neighbors of Karmovo and the Balkar auls Khabaz and, farther afield, Gundelen, had little to do with ethnicity.¹⁸⁴ Rather, they reflected the historic land-based feuds that existed between many neighboring villages in this land-starved region. Moreover, Khasaut's location on the mountain pastures, which, as in the past, became notorious for lawlessness and banditry (i.e. cattle and horse thieving and raiding of surrounding villages) during the Civil War, only increased such conflict during this period. But the Bolsheviks' introduction of the national principle elevated the importance of ethnicity for

¹⁸⁴ GARF 1318/1/231: 383.

the Karachai of Khasaut and exacerbated existing tensions by providing institutional support (i.e. the Karachai autonomy and its organs of power) and a rhetorical framework based on nationality and class for advancing their aims.

In their search for land, the Karachai leadership and the residents of Khasaut found common cause. By speaking the languages of nation and class and appealing to Soviet support for national self-determination, the residents of Khasaut could help the Karachai leadership in its goal of controlling the trans-Malka mountain pastures on which their aul was located and, in return for this favor, the Karachai leadership could allot Khasaut the additional land that they so desperately sought. In terms of “speaking national,” the Khasaut petitioners consistently stressed that their national minority status as a Karachai aul in Kabarda was unacceptable.¹⁸⁵ For example, stressing their ethno-linguistic differences with the Kabardian majority, the Khasaut petitioners claimed that as “native Karachai” (*prirodnye karachaevtsy*) living in Kabarda they feel “completely alien in terms of language, manners, customs, and *adat*.”¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, the petitioners emphasized that, given the “national enmity between Kabarda and Karachai,” Kabarda “completely ignores the interests of Khasaut.”¹⁸⁷ In terms of “speaking Bolshevik,” the Khasaut representatives painted Kabardians as class enemies. The petitioners concluded their long list of reasons why their aul should be included within Karachai’s borders with the following condemnation of Kabarda: “We are sure that Kabarda, as a land of petty bourgeoisie and wealthy farmers, will not adopt a proletarian lifestyle and way of

¹⁸⁵ GARF 5677/3/315: 22.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 382-383; GARF 5677/3/315: 12-13, 22; and GARF 1235/119/38: 80-81.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 12.

thinking anytime soon; the proletarian dreams of equal rights will not be made reality in Kabarda in the near future.”¹⁸⁸

The residents of Khasaut, as part of their strategy having their village transferred to Karachai, proceeded to ignore the VTsIK decree and *de facto* recognize the administrative jurisdiction of the Karachai-Cherkes AO over their village. On December 11, 1922, the Khasaut Village Assembly resolved to reject Kabardian administration “until the receipt of orders from Moscow.”¹⁸⁹ In 1922 and 1923 Khasaut paid its tax in kind to Karachai rather than Kabarda. Khasaut authorities did not allow Kabardian officials into their village, taking their orders instead from the Lesser Karachai District Executive Committee.¹⁹⁰ Tensions heightened as the Kabardino-Balkar leadership demanded that Khasaut submit to its authority and pay taxes to the Tax Department of the Kabardino-Balkar AO. In a telegram to the Central Committee and the VTsIK in Moscow, Kalmykov complained that “the aul Khasaut is located in Baksan District [of the Kabardino-Balkar AO]...[and] Karachai’s bid to subordinate Khasaut to its authority during the tax collection campaign is another seizure of the territory of Kabarda.”¹⁹¹ In February 1923, Kalmykov ordered the head of the Baksan District to subordinate Khasaut to the district-level executive committee.¹⁹² In an abortive attempt to reach a compromise with the Khasautites, on August 4, 1923, the Kabardino-Balkar TsIK adopted a resolution transferring Khasaut from Baksan District to Balkar District.¹⁹³ The Kabardian leadership

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 13.

¹⁸⁹ A. Kazharov, “Administrativno-territorial’noe razmezhivanie,” 58.

¹⁹⁰ GARF: 1318/1/231: 382; and GARF 1235/119/36: 72.

¹⁹¹ GARF: 1235/119/36: 135.

¹⁹² A. Kazharov, “Administrativno-territorial’noe razmezhivanie,” 58.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 54.

hoped to address Khasaut's ethno-cultural concerns by placing them in a common administrative district with their Balkar co-ethnics (the Karachai and Balkar languages and lifeways are identical). This compromise did not satisfy the Khasaut residents because it did not change their prospects for gaining access to a larger land allotment.

Meanwhile, between January and March 1923, the Kabardian leadership responded to Karachai's posturing by orchestrating a petition campaign of their own. The Kabardino-Balkar TsIK collected petitions from nearly all of Kabarda's villages in which the villagers recounted numerous incidents of Karachai raids and cattle thieving on the mountain pastures during their summer transhumances since 1918.¹⁹⁴ This Kabardian petition campaign was an effort to discredit Karachai claims to good stewardship over the mountain pastures and depict the Karachai as dangerous cattle thieves rather than peaceful shepherds in need of more land. For example, in an official complaint (*zhaloba*) to the Kabardino-Balkar TsIK signed by the Kezhne Village Assembly on January 29, the Kezhne villagers summarize their situation:

the Karachai stole from us a total 57 head of large cattle, 595 head of small cattle, and one horse...now our society is afraid to drive their cattle to the mountain pastures and we do not have enough land to keep our cattle on village land...this thieving is occurring solely on the basis of land. Having discussed this issue from all sides our society unanimously requests that the Nalchik District Executive Committee petition for the establishment of a clear border between with Karachai and the Mountaineer Republic...so that we can quietly go about our peacefully labor without carrying rifles on our shoulders."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ TsGA KBR: 2/1/91 (1923): 1-30.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 7-8.

Most of Kabarda's villages lodged similar complaints describing, often with great detail, the number of cattle stolen by the Karachai, the exact date, time, and place where the robbery occurred, and the value of the stolen property.

Despite these efforts to discredit the Karachai, the Karachai leadership's efforts to convince Soviet authorities that its shepherds desperately needed the trans-Malka mountain pastures paid dividends. In an abrupt turn of fortunes for Kabarda and the Kabardian leadership, on August 24, 1923, the VTsIK issued a decree calling for the temporary transfer of the trans-Malka pastures to Karachai for 1923 and 1924.¹⁹⁶ Shortly thereafter, the Karachai leadership gained the support of Nariman Narimanov, the Azeri Civil-War-era leader who had recently been appointed co-Chair of the VTsIK. In a November 6, 1923 report to the VTsIK, Narimanov argued that "the petitions of the residents of Khasaut are correct and legal. We should satisfy their requests and also reexamine the question of the land of allotment of the Karachai because several mistakes were made in the previous decree on this question."¹⁹⁷ On November 14, the VTsIK decreed the creation of new commission to reexamine the borders of KBAO and KChAO to be composed of Avel Enukidze, I. Smirnov, Grigorii Broido (Narkomnats), and Aleksandr Beloborodov (NKVD). The VTsIK reorganized this Commission on December 3 to include Kalinin, Narimanov, Pavel Smidovich, Smirnov, and Enukidze.¹⁹⁸ During its first meeting, on February 6, 1924, this latest VTsIK Commission decided to defer responsibility for examination and resolution of the Kabardino-Karachai territorial-

¹⁹⁶ GARF: 1235/119/36: 73.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 71

¹⁹⁸ A. Kazharov, "Administrativno-territorial'noe razmezhivanie," 60.

border dispute to the People's Commissariat of Land. Ultimately, the Narkomzem delegated the Kabardino-Karachai land question to the Odinstsov Commission,¹⁹⁹ which, as discussed above, also had the responsibility of establishing the borders between Kabarda and the new North Ossetian and Ingush Autonomous Oblasts.

As was to be expected, the Kabardian leadership reacted strongly against the VTsIK's temporary transfer of the trans-Malka pastures to the Karachai and the re-opening of the Kabardino-Karachai border dispute. In August 1923, shortly after receiving the order giving the Karachai the use of Kabarda's trans-Malka pastures, Kalmykov telegraphed Avel Enukidze, Kabarda's perceived ally in the VTsIK:

The plenum of the Kabardian Central Executive Committee is shocked and upset. We categorically protest this decree because the question of the borders of land-use with Karachai was already decided by the Presidium of the VTsIK...At the moment, the mountain pastures are covered with sheep and cattle from Kabardian villages...We warn that the VTsIK Presidium's decision to give permission to Karachai to use our pastures will provoke unwanted, large disturbances. Therefore, we consider the decision of the VTsIK unfulfillable.²⁰⁰

The Kabardian leadership did not limit its response to the turn of event in Karachai's favor to official protests and petitions; they took matters into their own hands at the local level, using legal and illegal means to do.

First, on February 23, 1924, the Central Executive Committee of the Kabardino-Balkar AO decreed the formation of a new, Mountain (*Nagornyi*) District in the northwest corner of the Oblast. This new district included Khasaut (in addition to neighboring Kabardian auls), the Zolka pastures, and the disputed Mountain (*nagornyi*) or trans-Malka pastures, which, according to the decree, "are of enormous economic significance

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 61.

²⁰⁰ GARF 1318/1/155 (1921-1923): 14.

for the Oblast.”²⁰¹ The decree established Piatigorsk, a large economic hub outside the borders of the KBAO, as the administrative center of this new district.²⁰² The ostensible reasons for the creation of the Mountain District was “to secure the economic relations between the peasantry of the northwest part of the Oblast with the neighboring territory of Terek Governorate and for the better administration of the vast territory of the Zolka and Mountain pastures.” While these official reasons are not untrue (they follow a pattern of placing the administration of predominantly rural, non-Russian administrative units in neighboring Russian cities), the creation of the Mountain District was also strategically connected with the question of jurisdiction over Khasaut and the trans-Malka pastures. First, the creation of a special district for the mountain pastures would allow the Kabardian leadership to tighten its administrative and police power over the region and counter the claims of Khasaut residents that their village was located too far away from the district administrative center. Indeed, the appointment of Kabarda’s security chiefs, Khabala Beslaneev (Oblast Department of Internal Affairs) and Mikhail Tkachenko (Oblast Militia), to head up the administration of the new District, attests to the security significance placed on this new district.²⁰³ Second, the Mountain District had a rhetorical and symbolic importance. Now a district of Kabardino-Balkaria carried the name (*nagornyi*) of the disputed territory. Also, now if this territory were transferred to Karachai, Kabarda would lose most, rather than a small portion, of a district.

²⁰¹ “Iz protokola zasedaniia Presidiuma TsIK KBAO o vydelenii iz oblasti severo-zapadnogo okruga i organizatsii v Piatigorske Revkoma,” in *Administrativno-territorial’nye preobrazovaniia v Kabardino-Balkarii*, 120-21.

²⁰² This may also be connected with Betal Kalmykov’s larger, ultimately unsuccessful, plan to gain approval for the transfer of Piatigorsk to Kabardino-Balkaria.

²⁰³ “Iz protokola zasedaniia Presidiuma TsIK KBAO o vydelenii iz oblasti severo-zapadnogo okruga,” 120-21.

Drought struck the plains of Kabarda in 1924, making the dispute over the trans-Malka pastures, in the drought-free mountain zone, all the more urgent for the Kabardian leadership. The Kabardino-Balkar administration planned to retake the trans-Malka pastures from Karachai in May 1924, in time for the summer transhumance. The leadership of the Kabardino-Balkar AO argued that Karachai's year of use of these pastures (decreed in August 1923) ended in May. Knowing that the Karachai leadership intended to keep its shepherds on the mountain pastures until the end of August, the Kabardian leadership proceeded to petition Moscow for the end of Karachai's use of the pastures while simultaneously concentrating paramilitary forces in the Mountain District in preparation for renewed conflict. On June 18, the VTsIK issued a clarification stating, much to the chagrin of the Kabardian leadership, that the Karachai could use the pastures until August 1.²⁰⁴ On July 11, after Kabarda's cattle had exhausted the Zolka pastures in the foothills, Mountain District head Beslaneev sent armed detachments to the trans-Malka pastures and forced out Karachai shepherds from the grass-rich pastures around Aursentkh, between the Malka and Kichmalka. Beslaneev distributed hayfields among Kabarda's villages.²⁰⁵ On July 14, the Kabardino-Balkar TsIK ordered hay collecting machines sent to the mountain pastures, mobilized groups of villagers from all over Kabarda to collect hay, and established block-posts on the border with Karachai, ordering border guards to "under no circumstance let Karachai enter the borders of Kabarda."²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ GARF 1235/119/36: 115.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 188.

²⁰⁶ A. Kazharov, "Administrativno-territorial'noe razmezhivanie," 64.

On July 21, as the Kabardians finished their swift operation to remove as much hay as possible from the mountain pastures, the VTsIK issued a final resolution on the borders between the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast and its neighbors based on the findings of the Odintsov Commission. The VTsIK decreed the transfer of Khasaut with its surrounding land allotment to the Karachai-Cherkes AO. Additionally, in order to link Khasaut with the rest of Karachai territorially, the KChAO received all of the land between Khasaut and the old Karachai border. The July 21 VTsIK resolution was “final and not subject to reexamination” and it bound the Karachai side to resist making any further territorial claims against Kabarda. This resolution satisfied the Kabardian side, despite losing Khasaut, the majority of the trans-Malka mountain pastures remaining within the borders of the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast. After July 21, the Kabardian leadership considered the battle over Khasaut over. In a decree to the Chair of the Mountain District Revkom, Kalmykov gave orders “to always try to avoid provoking tensions with the Khasautites, and liquidate any misunderstandings peacefully [and] show that we will live in peace and friendship with our laboring neighbors.”²⁰⁷ Indeed, Kabardino-Balkar authorities responded to several incidences of conflict between, on the one hand, the Karachai of Khasaut and, on the other hand, both Kabardians and Balkars, in December of 1924 and January of 1925, by dispatching officials to Karachai to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

In the summer of 1926 the Khasaut question came to the fore again when the Kabardino-Balkar Executive Committee received petitions for annexation to Kabardino-

²⁰⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 66.

Balkaria from representatives of two villages located in Karachai-Cherkessia, close to the Kabardino-Balkar border: Khasaut and Staro-Abukovskaia. This was an unexpected turn of events for a Kabardian leadership that had ruled out the possibility of changing the border back in their favor after the July 21, 1924, VTsIK decree. However, these petitions gave the Kabardian leadership only small hope that higher authorities would approve another border change. The petition from Khasaut was signed by just over a quarter of the villages' households. Claiming that "former Tsarist servitors...forcibly tore us away from Kabarda and for some unknown reason attached us to the Lesser-Karachai district against our will and, according to the old tsarist formula, continue to oppress us," these petitioners represented families that apparently lost out economically and politically by the transfer of Khasaut to Karachai. As in the Lesken case, Khasaut divided along socio-economic lines and the losing side hoped to use Kabarda's desire to regain land to its advantage. It is unclear, however, why this pro-Kabarda faction had not spoken out earlier or whether they really were "the poorest members of the society,"²⁰⁸ as they claimed. It seems clear though this was a group that lost out under Karachai rule. In any event, after the issuance of a definitive ruling on Khasaut, in 1924, which put an end to the long conflict, and with only a minority of households reflected in the petition, these villagers and Kabarda had little chance of reopening the case. Similarly, the Staro-Abukovskaia residents, who were Kabardians surrounded by Karachai auls, stood little chance of having their request met precisely because their village was separated from

²⁰⁸ GARF 1235/140/615 (1926): 4.

Kabardino-Balkar by a territory heavily populated by Karachai.²⁰⁹ Having nothing to lose by supporting these petitions, the Kabardino-Balkar Executive Committee gave their approval and forwarded them to the VTsIK.²¹⁰ As was to be expected, the higher Soviet authorities rejected these petitions. Ultimately, the Khasaut petitioners quietly ended their campaign and the Kabardians of Staro-Abukovskaia decided to resettle to their co-ethnics in Kabardino-Balkaria.²¹¹

The End of Soviet Border Conflict and the Balance Sheet

Between 1918 and the final VTsIK decree in 1924 on the borders of Kabardino-Balkaria and its neighbors, Kabarda gave up about 122,213 desiatinas (nearly 330,000 acres) to its land-poor mountaineer neighbors. Karachai received a total 92,153 desiatinas (248,813 acres) from the communal mountain pastures and tsarist-era private lands. In the Urukhesken valley, the Soviet state transferred 6,341 desiatinas, including the Ossetian villages Lesken and Srednyi Uruk, to North Ossetia. In the Kurp region of Lesser Kabarda, Ingushetia received two small Ingush homesteads, Kusovo and Indievo, and the Ukrainian Kievskii homestead, totaling 2,759 desiatinas (7,449 acres). Finally, the Balkars received 20,960 desiatinas (56,592 acres).²¹²

The absence of popular grassroots mobilization by 1928 meant the absence of border conflict. By this time the last of the border disputes between Kabardino-Balkaria and its neighbors petered out with no changes to official borders. Soviet administrators

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 5.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 2.

²¹¹ Ibid., 10.

²¹² Mesiatz, 88.

decided future questions over borders swiftly and behind closed doors in Moscow and Rostov-on-Don (the center of the North-Caucasus Krai). For example, the 1932 annexation to Kabardino-Balkaria of the predominantly Cossack district around the *stanitsa* Prokhladnaia was based on administrative concerns (the district's loss of several villages to neighboring Russian regions made it too small to exist as a separate district) and the *stanitsa*'s close economic ties to Kabardino-Balkaria's Malka District.²¹³ While Kabardino-Balkar officials voiced their desire for Prokhladnyi District to be annexed to their autonomous oblast, regional authorities in Rostov-on-Don determined the fate of Prokhladnyi District with minimal input from local officials. More importantly, the process of transferring this large Cossack *stanitsa* to a national autonomous oblast evoked neither protest nor praise from villagers; indeed, their voices were absent from the discussion. The collectivization campaign (discussed in the next chapter) provides an explanation for this shift from a populist to an administrative approach to border adjustments in the North Caucasus. After collectivization, implemented in its most extreme form in Kabardino-Balkaria before the other national Oblasts and Republics of the North Caucasus, there was little point in a Kabardian, Ossetian, Balkar, or Karachai fighting for land that he did not control, land that would not provide sustenance for his household or village.

²¹³ "Postanovlenie prezidiuma Prokhladnenskogo Raiispolkoma 'Postanovlenie prezidiuma Severo-Kavkazskogo Kraiispolkoma ob uprizenii prokhladnenskogo raiona" and "Postanovlenie Prezidiuma Primalkinskogo Raiispolkoma o prieme piati sel'sovetov likvidiruemogo Prokhladnenskogo Raiona," in *Administrativno-territorial'nye preobrazovaniia v Kabardino-Balkarii*, 283-86.

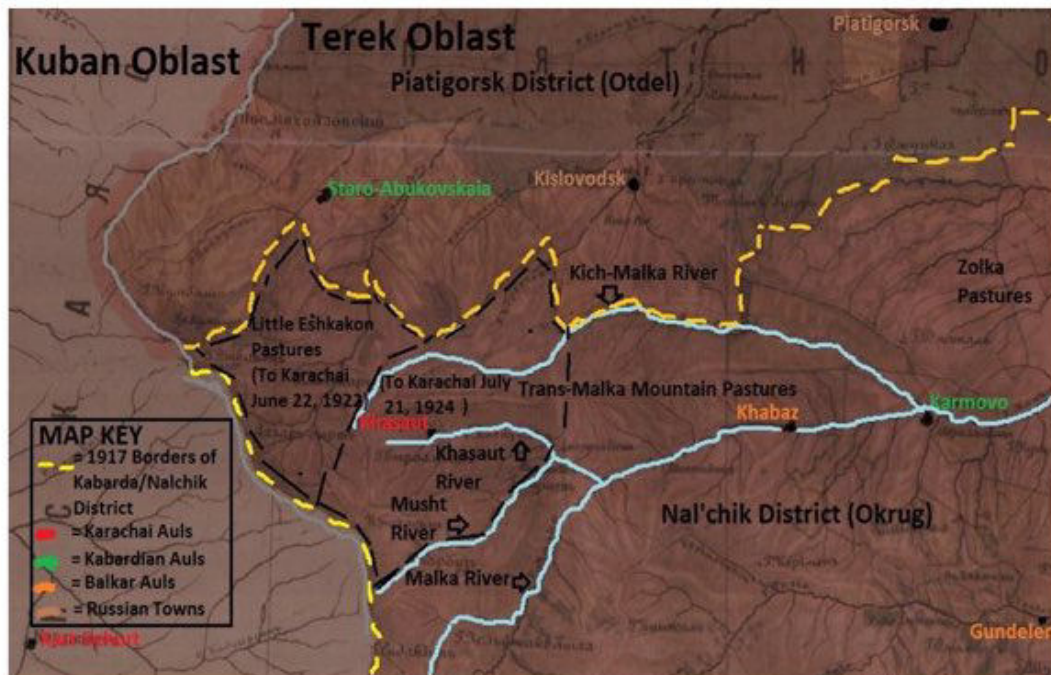


Figure 6: Northwest sector of Kabarda/Nalchik Okrug in its 1917 borders with territory transferred to Karachai by VTsIK decrees in 1922 and 1924 indicated. Source: M M Bazorkin, *Karta Terskoi Oblasti* (Nalchik: Pravitel'stvo Ingushetii, 2002).

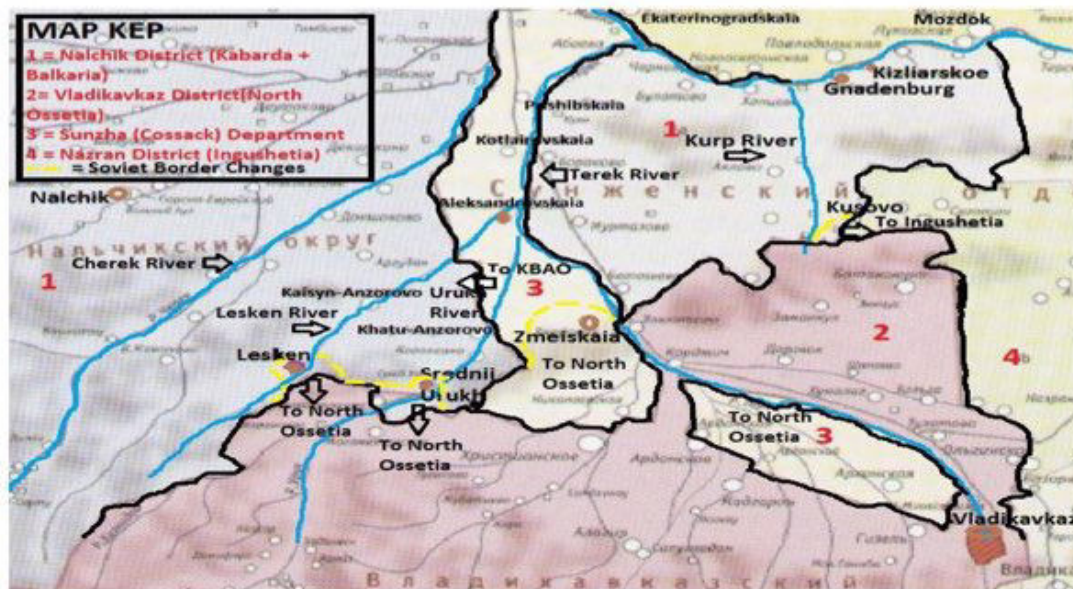


Figure 7: Map of Terek Oblast showing final 1920s border changes between Kabardino-Balkaria and its neighbors. Source: Tsutsiev, *Atlas etnopoliticheskoi istorii Kavkaza*, 14.



Figure 8: The North Caucasus circa 1928. *Source: Tsutsiev, Atlas etnopoliticheskoi istorii Kavkaza, 22.*

Conclusions

In the final analysis, the conflicts surrounding Lesken, Khasaut, the Kurp villages, and the Cossack *stanitsy* do not demonstrate the type of “divide-and-rule” policies that scholars traditionally attributed to the Bolsheviks during the formation of the Soviet Union.²¹⁴ Indeed, as scholars have recently demonstrated for other parts of the Soviet Union,²¹⁵ it is difficult to identify a single guiding principle behind the delimitation of borders here. Rather, the administrative statuses of these villages were determined by the interaction of ideological, economic, ethnographic, and, most importantly, administrative principles. To cite one example, the 1924 commission chaired by S. Odinstev of the

²¹⁴ For the traditional view on Soviet nationality policies during the formation of the Soviet Union see Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

²¹⁵ See footnote 86.

People's Commissariat of Land criticized the work of the 1923 Commission headed by I. Smirnov from the Central Executive Committee for being too ideological and disregarding state economic concerns. According to Odintsov "the foundation for the resolution of the [land] question should not be an equalizing redistribution of the land of one oblast between neighboring oblasts [as Smirnov advocated], but the transfer of territory on the basis of economic expediency as understood by the state."²¹⁶ Therefore, in the Lesken case, while Smirnov recommended granting any and all Kabardian lands that village's residents had ever owned or rented, however briefly, to North Ossetia as part of Lesken's land allotment, Odintsov considered how transferring a particular allotment would affect the economies of the two oblasts. In point of fact, Odintsov ruled against transferring forest allotments in the Lesken region to residents because doing so would put the nearby Argudan lumber factory out of commission.²¹⁷ While we can see opposing goals of ideology and economic development at work in the approaches of these two commissions, each expert commission was clearly under pressure from Moscow ("the bureaucrat-policeman") to resolve the Lesken question once and for all so that stable Soviet administration could be installed in the village. In Lesken, as with other cases in the North Caucasus, and was often the case in Russian imperial management for centuries, Moscow's main priority was to push for order end the administrative chaos that reigned supreme on the ground.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ GARF 1235/121/77 (1924): 97.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 110.

²¹⁸ For example, Matthew Romaniello make this point in his book on sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century Kazan in *The Elusive Empire*; For a more general discussion of the Russian Empire's quest for order see Kappeler, *passim*.

The delimitation of ethno-territorial borders between Kabarda and its neighbors illustrates the “participatory aspect of double assimilation,” the important role that modern states play in forging identity categories, and the strength of these categories in shaping modern societies.²¹⁹ Conflicts over land which blended into political disputes over national boundaries in the 1920s served as immediate and effective lessons in the importance of national and class identifications and categories in the modernizing Soviet state. Learning how to speak national and speak Bolshevik provided “social legitimacy” for the peoples of the central Caucasus.²²⁰ These new literacies also transformed the peoples of the central Caucasus. By mastering the modern discourses of national rights and self-determination on the one hand, and class struggle and social equality on the other, the peasants and shepherds who wrote petitions and often travelled thousands of miles to plead their cases at central party and state agencies in Moscow, embarked on a process of becoming *active* and *integrated* members of the Soviet state in addition to members of their newly promulgated nations.

The North Caucasus figures little in the major studies of the Soviet state’s fraught delimitation of national borders and most discussions focus on conflict between mountaineers and Cossacks.²²¹ Given the master narrative of Cossack-mountaineer violence in Caucasus historiography, this latter tendency is understandable. Indeed, the prevalence of Cossack-mountaineer violence, ultimately resulting in the deportation of

²¹⁹ Hirsch, “Towards an Empire of Nations,” 205.

²²⁰ Dragostinova, “Speaking National,” 157.

²²¹ Martin discusses the North Caucasus only as an example of the “Kazakh Variant.” See Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 59-67; The delimitation borders in the North Caucasus gets brief mention in Hirsch’s book in relation to *raionirovanie*. See Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 98. Pipes spends significant time examining the initial Bolshevik rise to power in the North Caucasus, but spends relatively little time examining the fraught process of border delimitation. See Pipes, 223-24.

stanitsy from the Sunzha region in 1920, led Terry Martin to place the North Caucasus in the same category as Kazakhstan in his typology of ethnic conflict and resulting from border delimitation.²²² To be sure, there are striking similarities between the North Caucasus and Kazakh cases. Both regions had witnessed recent and extensive Russian colonization at the expense of native landholdings and, in the aftermath of the Civil War, the native elites of both regions called for “the equalization of native and European landholdings.”²²³ In both cases, the establishment of national autonomy and the land question intersected to produce a wave of native-settler violence culminating in partially successful attempts to deport non-native groups from the region. However, in the North Caucasus, unlike in the Kazakh case, long-standing socio-economic tensions and land-based stratification among the numerous indigenous mountaineer communities led to fierce conflict within the region’s ethnically mixed indigenous societies. Given the high incidence of border conflict between different mountaineer ethnicities, the North Caucasus, as this chapter demonstrates, also resembled Martin’s “Uzbek variant” of ethnic conflict “prevalent throughout the rest of Central Asia,” where, in the absence of substantial non-Russian national minorities, “the formation of national republics [or Oblasts] not only increased ethnic conflict, but also turned local disputes, often with a clan or regional aspect, into national ones.” In Central Asia as in the North Caucasus, “any ethnic conflict immediately drew the interest of that ethnic group’s ‘home’

²²² Martin, *The Affirmative Acton Empire*, 57.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 60

republic.” Border disputes in both regions “illustrate the role played by government actors—at the local, republican, and all-union levels—in exacerbating ethnic conflict.”²²⁴

The preceding chapters on land relations, colonization, and empire in the central Caucasus help us understand the formation of Soviet nations as *longue-durée* processes, beginning well before the rapid modernization of the Soviet state. Tsarist colonization and imperial integration in the North Caucasus were part of a transitional period during which the preconditions for later, Soviet-sponsored, nation-building were set in place. From the late-eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries the ethnic borders of contemporary North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia, Ingushetia and other latter-day national communities began to take shape as a result of tsarist colonial policies, population resettlement, and early experiments with social engineering. More importantly, in the nineteenth century, new colonial-era administrative units, formed with an adherence to ethnic borders, albeit loose and vaguely defined, replaced traditional feudal social, political and economic structures that were often multi-ethnic, invariably decentralized, and rarely encompassed entire ethnic communities. The Soviet state used these tsarist-era administrative formations as the basis (not the blueprint) for ethno-national delimitation in the North Caucasus. However, tsarist-era administrative units only loosely respected ethnic boundaries, often giving precedence to natural boundaries and administrative expedience; this sporadic tsarist disregard for ethnic homogenization frequently resulted in ethnic exclaves like Lesken and Khasaut along frontier territories. Far from being artificial or inherently problematic, these villages formed out of the

²²⁴ Ibid., 69

natural inactions of space, social status, and ethnicity. These areas often created great difficulties for the ethno-centric Soviet state.

In determining the status of Lesken, Khasaut, the Kurp villages, and the Cossack *stanitsy*, finding a workable resolution to seemingly intractable disputes was the Soviet state's primary consideration. As the arbiter of local disputes throughout a vast and often unruly empire, the Soviet state took on an enduring Russian-imperial role: referee. This dynamic was, of course, spurred on as much by state officials trying to establish order as by those on the ground (upper and lower Leskenites, for example) trying to gain an advantage. This reactive role, whereby the state responded to or was forced into local political dynamics and initiatives, has been well documented throughout the tsarist period, but Soviet studies have tended to emphasize the state as a "landscaper"—intervening in and engineering or "gardening" society according to its ideological goals.²²⁵ The conflicts that accompanied border delimitation in the North Caucasus indicate that we should pay more attention to the reactive, mediator role of the state in the Soviet period too.

These continuities should not be taken too far. Ideology was more important to the functioning of the Soviet state than it was for tsarist empire. Imperial Russia tolerated ethnically mixed administrative divisions and even fostered them when it suited its military, political and economic plans. The formation of administrative-territorial divisions according to ethnographic principles in the tsarist period was a reflection of the relatively westernized mentalities of the tsarist administrators, who viewed Caucasus

²²⁵ Breyfogle, 74-76.

society through the lens of ethnicity and believed that ethnically homogeneous administrative borders would provide the best means to effectively administer the region and maintain order. At the same, time many of these Westernized administrators were native sons of the Caucasus and also brought local visions to bear on the administration. By contrast, the Soviet division of the North Caucasus along national lines reflected a self-conscious and hotly debated ideological program of “state-sponsored evolutionism,” whereby the Soviet state would guide its diverse peoples, all at varying stages of historical development, along a Marxist-Leninist teleological timeline from a pre-national, to national, to supranational phase coinciding with the construction of Communist society.²²⁶ According to Bolshevik ideology, then, the existence of ethnically Ossetian and Karachai auls on the “wrong” sides of the Kabardino-Balkar/North-Ossetia and Kabardino-Balkar/Karachai border was not to be tolerated, for their persistence would inhibit the Soviet state’s ability to transform its citizenry, in this case into members of modern nations and eventually members of a supranational Soviet people. That said, ethno-national delimitation and attendant border conflicts were not always adjudicated on strict ideological principles alone. The Soviet state was often very concerned about the immediate economic consequences of border changes. Moreover, the Soviet state, like its tsarist predecessor, was a “bureaucrat-policeman state” concerned with maintaining order and stability. These “administrative” concerns weighed heavily on the Soviet state’s decisions in the various border conflicts discussed in this chapter. For

²²⁶ For an explanation of “state-sponsored evolutionism” see Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 7.

example, the state's decision to keep the Kabardians and Balkars together in a single ethno-territorial unit reflected both economic and administrative concerns.

In creating a shared, dual-titular, national homeland for the Kabardians and Balkars, the Soviet state created a new type of identity category. In the compromise that prevented the administrative-territorial separation of Kabardians and Balkars the Kabardian leadership agreed to grant the Balkar people access to as much land as was needed for their economic needs. This new Balkar land should not be considered a transfer to another ethno-territorial unit in the same way as the land annexed to Karachai, Ingushetia, and North Ossetia. The Balkars' land would remain part of a united Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast (now Republic). While the Balkars had the use of these new lands (as they still do), they would not be firmly enshrined by national borders as Balkar land. That is, rather than a Kabardino-Balkaria consisting of two clearly delineated Kabardian and Balkar regions, the creation and, as we will see, subsequent historical development of Kabardino-Balkaria was an attempt to forge a dual-titular autonomous administrative unit, the territory of which would be considered, at least in the official discourse, the common property of all the peoples of Kabardino-Balkaria. Indeed, the term "Kabardino-Balkar people" came into increasing use as the Soviet period progressed. Ultimately, while it may not have been a stated and conscious goal at the outset, the project of Kabardino-Balkaria (and other multi-titular autonomies) became an attempt to forge a supranational Kabardino-Balkar identity. Soviet citizens of Kabardino-Balkaria would have an extra possible layer in their (ethnic, national, cultural and territorial) identities: their passport nationality (Kabardian, Balkar, Russian...);

Kabardino-Balkar identity; and a larger Soviet identity. In most senses, the collapse of the Soviet Union was a reflection of the failure of the latter of these three identity projects. As we shall see, the emergence of strident Kabardian and Balkar ethno-nationalist movements with separatist and irredentist aspirations indicates the weakness of a common Kabardino-Balkar identity as well. Yet, the relative interethnic peace and continued co-existence of Kabardians and Balkars in a common Republic shows that the Kabardino-Balkar project was, for a variety of reasons, not a failure.

Despite certain similarities between tsarist and Soviet methods of governance, insights from colonial/post-colonial studies do little to illuminate Soviet policies in the former tsarist colonies, especially where ethno-national border delimitation is concerned.²²⁷ Indeed, the present analysis of border delimitation and interethnic conflict confirms the contention that it is more productive to view these policies, in the words of Adeeb Khalid, in terms of “the activist, interventionist, mobilizational state that seeks to sculpt its citizenry in an ideal image” than the imperialist state that seeks to maintain control over its overseas colonies and enforce colonial difference.²²⁸

The processes of nation-building at work in the North Caucasus of the 1920s also bear striking resemblances to earlier processes described by Peter Sahlins in his study of another mountainous borderland, the Cerdanya, the border region between France and

²²⁷ On the colonial and modernist comparative models see the following articles, four of which are featured in a special edition of the *Slavic Review*. Adeeb Khalid, “Between Empire and Revolution: New Work on Soviet Central Asia,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 7, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 865-84; idem., “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,” *Slavic Review*, 65 (2006): 231-51; Adrienne Edgar, “Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet ‘Emancipation’ of Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective,” *ibid.*, 252-72; Peter Blitstein, “Cultural Diversity and the Interwar Conjuncture: Soviet Nationality Policy in its Comparative Context,” *ibid.*, 273-93; Mark Beissinger, “Soviet Empire as ‘Family Resemblance,’” *ibid.*, 294-303.

²²⁸ Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization,” 232.

Spain in the Pyrenees in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sahlins argues that it was not so much the efforts at national integration on the part of modernizing nation-states that turned Cerdanyans into Spaniards or Frenchmen, but rather “the evocation of national identities...by the village communities of the Cerdanya [after national border delimitation] was grounded in local economic interests, and in a local sense of place.”²²⁹ According to Sahlins, “disputes among villages divided by the [national] boundary became vehicles for the development and expression of national identities in the Cerdanya.”²³⁰ The same processes were at work in this early-modern borderland as in the Lesken-Uruk river valley and the trans-Malka mountain pastures of early-twentieth-century the central Caucasus: the mere delimitation of the borders connected communities to different polities (each with their benefits and obligations) and transformed the sense of belonging and identity of the local inhabitants. In the Soviet case, as exemplified here by the cases of Lesken and Khasaut, we have this process of the transformation of identities through new connections to certain governing entities (local/ethno-national and Soviet) and also the more ideological drive of dividing people by perceived nations. Therefore, while the national discourse introduced by the Bolsheviks may have been unique to the modern period, viewed comparatively, the processes that resulted in the formation of national identity, in addition to being the “constructed” products of a modernizing interventionist state, are also the less intentional offspring of state-building projects not unique to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

²²⁹ Sahlins, *Boundaries*, 160.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.

How did interactions change between residents of Lesken and Khasaut, on the one hand, and, neighboring Kabardian, Balkar, Karachai, and Ossetian communities, on the other, as a result of the triumph of the national principle under Soviet rule? Indeed, to what extent did the national principle triumph on the ground? Did the delimitation of borders and the institutionalization of nationality represent a fundamental rupture in the lived experience of ethnicity? Given the available source base, it is difficult to answer these questions of “everyday ethnicity” with certainty.²³¹ Nevertheless, we can hazard tentative conclusions.

Soviet policies caused inter-communal tension by providing opportunities for the instrumental use of nationality. Ethnically and religiously diverse mountain regions like the Caucasus are often dismissed as places that are predisposed to “ethnic conflict.” The stories of Lesken and Khasaut serve as important reminders that, at their roots, conflicts in such regions have historically been fought over access to scarce land resources rather than national rights. These disputes could be inter-communal or intra-communal. Where they were inter-communal, the introduction of the national principle propelled land disputes into conflicts over national self-determination, and, in this way, the ethnicizing Soviet state created “ethnic” violence. Arguments of national-self-determination helped those involved find institutional leverage for what were essentially, or at least originally, conflicts driven by local, non-national, concerns. Transformed by the national principle, these conflicts became more violent and prolonged, involving far more people, institutions and resources than they otherwise would have. For example, during the same

²³¹ Rogers Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

period, fierce conflicts regularly erupted between and within ethnically Kabardian villages over similar issues of land rights. However, these conflicts rarely turned as violent and took on such high stakes as the struggles over Lesken and Khasaut. The relative mildness of these conflicts arose not because the passions of the conflicting sides were any less virulent, but because, with the absence of a national border in the immediate vicinity, these villages were unable to utilize the national principle and gain institutional supports to help them press their claims. Ultimately, Soviet officials did not seek to create interethnic conflict through the drawing of borders in the North Caucasus; their intentions were quite the opposite. However, by delimiting these borders and determining access to land according to "nationality," Soviet policy makers inadvertently created new social fractures. The resultant reconfigurations of territory and sense of belonging to a shared community have been the cause of much conflict throughout the Caucasus region.

Chapter 5:

From KBASSR to KASSR to KBASSR:

Inter-Communal Relations, Nationalities Policy, and the Deportation, Return, and Reintegration of the Balkars, 1944-1966

Early in the morning of March 8, 1944, over a year after Soviet troops had liberated the central Caucasus from Nazi occupation, NKVD troops flooded into the slumbering mountain valleys of the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (as the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast became known from 1936 on). Soldiers stormed into Balkar homes, informed the usually unsuspecting residents of their impending deportation from their homes on charges of mass treason during the occupation, and instructed families to board the waiting Studebaker trucks in twenty minutes with no more than 500 kilograms of their worldly possessions. Soldiers shot or arrested those who resisted. Trucks transported their human cargo to the nearest train station and the Soviet security services loaded 37,713 Balkars—nearly the entire Balkar population not serving in the Red Army—onto cattle cars bound for Soviet Central Asia. 37,103 Balkars reached their final destinations on the barren steppe of Kazakhstan and Kirgizia. During brief stops, the Balkars hurriedly buried the bodies of children and elderly who died of

malnutrition and disease along the way.¹ As the war came to an end, rather than receiving a hero's welcome in their homeland, demobilized Balkar soldiers received orders to join their families in exile. Indeed, officially, after their deportation, the Balkars no longer had a homeland in the Soviet Union. Soviet authorities renamed the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR the Kabardian ASSR and, henceforth, no mention of the Balkars—their history or their very existence—could be made in official publications.

The removal of the Balkars from the North Caucasus was one of about a dozen other mass deportations of entire ethnicities from the Caucasus, the Crimea, and lower Volga to Central Asia and Siberia during World War Two.² In late 1956, Nikita Khrushchev allowed most of the “punished peoples,” including the Balkars, to return home after thirteen years of exile and, in early 1957, the Soviet government restored their autonomous administrative units. For most involved, however, the terror of deportation and exile did not end in 1957; their return marked the beginning of a new struggle for full rehabilitation. This struggle continued into the post-Soviet period and the legacies of Stalin-era deportations continue to inform ethno-political discourse in the Caucasus, the Crimea, and elsewhere. The idea and practice of rehabilitation, as it developed by the end

¹ Khadzhi-Murat Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno: deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 2004), 16-23.

² English-language works on Stalinist ethnic cleansing are numerous particularly in regard to the Crimean Tatars. See, for example, Polian, *Against their Will*; Michaela Pohl, “The Virgin Lands Between Memory and Forgetting: People and Transformation in the Soviet Union, 1954-1960” (PhD Diss., Indiana University, 1999); Greta Lynn Uehling, *Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars' Deportation and Return* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Brian Glyn Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora Experience and the Forging of a Nation* (Boston: Brill, 2001); Norman Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples*; J. Otto Pohl, “Stalin's Genocide against the ‘Repressed Peoples’,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 2, no. 2 (2000): 267-93; Idem., *Ethnic cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999); Robert Conquest, *The Nation Killers: The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities* (London: Macmillan, 1970); and Nikolai F. Bugai, *The Deportation of Peoples in the Soviet Union* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1996).

of the Soviet period, was multifaceted. 1) Political rehabilitation: the attainment of an official apology from the state condemning Stalin's ethnic deportations, the cancelation of all Stalin-era decrees and legislation on the "punished peoples," the ethno-territorial restoration of their homelands as they existed on the eve of deportation, and the full right of return. 2) Socio-economic rehabilitation: programs designed to compensate for and alleviate the deleterious social and economic effects caused by deportation and exile. 3) Finally, cultural rehabilitation: state programs for the rebirth and revitalization of the languages and cultures of the deported peoples and the banning and criminalization of publications defaming the punished peoples as traitors.³

The deportation, return, and rehabilitation of the Balkars raise numerous questions about the historic relationship between Balkars and Kabardians, these two communities' relationship to their land, and the relationship between both of these communities and the Soviet state. In exploring these questions, this chapter uses the Balkar deportations as a lens to examine larger questions of inter-communal relations, Soviet nationalities policies, and ethnic cleansing from the 1930s to the 1960s. Why did the Soviet security services deport the Balkars and not the Kabardians? Was there a connection between inter-communal relations and the deportations? Did Kabardians play a role in the deportation and did they stand to gain through the removal of the Balkars? Were there any significant differences in the way Kabardians and Balkars experienced the decade and a half of Stalinist rule preceding the deportations? What role did land play in the

³ For a full description of the rehabilitation program as it stood at the end of the Soviet period, see the 1991 Russian federal law "On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression." "Zakon Rossiiskoi Sovetskoi Federativnoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki 'O reabilitatsii repressirovannykh narodov' (26 apreliia 1991 g.)," in *Balkartsy: vyselenie i vozvrashchenie*, ed. Kh.-M. A. Sabanchiev (Nalchik: Elbrus, 2008), 415-17.

deportations and how did the Balkar deportation affect land relations in the region? How did post-War Soviet nationalities policies affect Kabardians and the exiled Balkars? To what extent did the former symbiosis among the communities of Kabarda/Kabardino-Balkaria, and between Kabardians and Balkars in particular, reappear after the Balkars' return from exile?

For all its significance, the Balkar deportation was just one part of a much larger, complex web of inter-communal relations, state policies, and violence that we see from the early 1930s to the late 1960s. The chapter begins with a discussion of how Kabardians and Balkars experienced the Stalinist policies of the 1930s—nativization (*korenizatsiia*), collectivization, industrialization, and the Terror—in not dissimilar ways. With collectivization, and the revolutionary shift in structures of land ownership and usage of that agrarian policy, the land question that had been at the core of inter-communal and colonial relations was fundamentally changed. Afterwards, top-down state policies rather than historic local concerns drove inter-communal politics in Kabardino-Balkaria. These politics revolved around disparities in levels of socio-economic and cultural modernization rather than disparities in land tenure. Soviet nationalities and land policies, perhaps inadvertently, reduced tensions between Kabardino-Balkaria's non-Russian communities. To the extent that inter-communal tensions surfaced publically in the 1930s, they were now most often between Russians, on the one hand, and Kabardians and Balkars, on the other, and they reflected shifts in Moscow's policies rather than long-standing grievances and land-access concerns.

This chapter also explores the goals, outcomes, and extremes of post-war Soviet nationalities policy. The divergent fates of the Kabardian and Balkar peoples during the critical late-Stalin years transformed each community fundamentally, if differently. reflect the opposing extremes of nationalities policy during this critical period that would fundamentally change Kabardians and Balkars, though in different ways. From the late-1940s on, Kabardians received unprecedented state support for education, national culture, and social mobility. More than in the pre-war years, the post-war years witnessed the beginnings of a thorough-going Soviet modernization of the Kabardian people. Meanwhile, their former Balkar neighbors lived in exile from their homelands, deprived of many of their civil rights. This experience stunted the demographic and socio-economic, and cultural development of the Balkar people and its legacies continue to shape Balkar national consciousness.

I also demonstrate Soviet nationalities policy exhibited great consistency across the pre- and post-World-War-Two divide, as evidenced in the state's renewed emphasis on nativization policies (i.e. support for non-Russian, national minority cultures and assisted social mobility for non-Russians) for those peoples, like the Kabardians, whom the state did not regard as collectively disloyal. In contrast to many studies of the Soviet nationality policy, I argue that the Soviet state ultimately never rejected affirmative-action-style policies, even after Stalin. Rather, the state's sporadic shifts in emphasis toward policies seemingly at odds with nativization, such as ethnic cleansing or the promotion of Russian-language education, have obscured the consistency of policies associated with nativization.

Finally, this chapter examines the socio-economic reintegration of the Balkars after their return to the North Caucasus beginning in 1957. In contrast to other deported peoples, by pursuing “affirmative-action” policies aimed at leveling disparities in education and employment levels between Kabardians and Balkars, local state organs endeavored to ameliorate the deleterious socio-economic effects of deportation and exile on the Balkar people. I argue that the expansion of nativization policies among Kabardians during the decade preceding the Balkars’ return—and the attendant development of an educational and economic infrastructure geared toward the specific needs and conditions of a non-Russian republic—facilitated the rapid reintegration of the Balkars. This chapter also demonstrates the importance of the long-standing Kabardino-Balkar symbiosis as one of the factors that promoted the Balkars’ relatively seamless reintegration. For many in Kabardino-Balkaria, particularly Kabardians, the deportation of the Balkars was a difficult and unwelcome personal loss rather than an opportunity for personal economic gain. In addition to local government, local communities—Kabardians, Russians, Jews, and others—enthusiastically greeted the return of their former neighbors and made contributions and sacrifices to assist returning Balkar families because they understood the complementary role that Balkars historically played in the local economy and because many local residents were connected to Balkars through extended family ties and long-standing friendships.

Kabardians and Balkars under Stalinism

In the wake of the tensions and intermittent violence between Kabardians and Balkars during the national border delimitations and land reforms of the early 1920s, Stalin's "revolution from above" that began in 1928 fundamentally changed the Kabardian-Balkar relations. As we have seen, conflict between Kabardian and Balkar communities over land rights continued to flare up after the (re)unification of the Kabardians and Balkars into a shared autonomous oblast in 1922. However, the compromise resolution to the ethno-political conflict between the Kabardian and Balkar national leaderships meant that rather than both sides mobilizing their co-ethnics, they instead worked together to resolve disputes peacefully without turning them into larger questions of national rights. Between 1928 and the full collectivization of agriculture in Kabardino-Balkaria in the early 1930s, land disputes between Kabardian and Balkar auls and, judging by available sources, disputes between Kabardians and Balkars in general, quickly dissipated. Disputes diminished at this stage in large measure because the Soviet state and the Kabardino-Balkar administration had made it clear that the opportunity for border revisions had passed. Tensions also diminished because the political compromise that resulted in the formation of Kabardino-Balkaria was based in part on the idea that the land resources in the KBAO would be shared among its peoples according to need rather than nationality. In the first half of the 1930s the most important question for the Balkars became how and when collectivization would affect their stockbreeding economy and way of life. When forced collectivization finally reached the Balkars, several years after the collectivization of Kabardian agriculture, they demonstrated little active resistance to Soviet policies.

Kabardian and Balkar experiences during the Stalinist 1930s were very similar because, in the eyes of the Soviet state, they were both titular national minorities on their way to developing into “socialist nations” and, in order to achieve this development as quickly as possible, both were equally in need of state intervention and support.

During the Civil War and early 1920s local concerns, particularly over access to land, had major impacts on the implementation and consequences of larger Soviet state policies. Beginning around 1928, and coinciding with Stalin’s “revolution from above,” the concerns of the central Soviet authorities in Moscow—related to social engineering, security, and economic modernization—became primary movers of events. This primacy of central policies and ideological imperatives is borne out in the application of nationalities policy and collectivization, the scope of Stalinist repression, and administrative-territorial changes in Kabardino-Balkaria. This shift to centralized decision-making had a crucial impact on inter-communal relations and, in particular, on the relative peace between Kabardians and Balkars during Stalinism. A comparison of the history of Kabardino-Balkaria before and after the late 1920s indicates that there was greater conflict when issues were locally driven, but when issues were decided centrally, the resultant conflicts were not between Kabardian and Balkars but rather between the local nationalities and Russians and the central administration. 1930s Kabardino-Balkaria witnessed resistance to and conflict with Soviet power—though this resistance was relatively weak in comparison with other parts of the North Caucasus—but not conflict between Kabardians and Balkars.

Nationalities Policy in 1930s Kabardino-Balkaria

Available primary sources from the 1930s indicate a near absence of conflict between Kabardians and Balkars. There is little record of them because it was not in the Kabardino-Balkar leadership's interest, owing to shifts in Soviet nationalities policy priorities, to allow tensions between titular ethnicities to escalate or to publicize such tensions to a wide Soviet audience. Problems of inter-communal relations in Kabardino-Balkaria during the 1930s fit the pattern that scholars of Soviet nationalities policy, particularly Terry Martin and Francine Hirsch, have described for this period.⁴ These were tensions between non-Russians (usually members of titular nationalities) and Russians. According to Martin's analysis of what he terms the "Greatest Danger Principle," in the late 1920s and first half of the 1930s, Stalin's belief that "great-power chauvinism" (i.e. Russian nationalism) was a greater danger than local bourgeois nationalism (non-Russian, minority nationalisms) undergirded Soviet nationalities policy.⁵ By the mid-1930s, as a result of increasing geo-political tensions and the related rehabilitation of the Russian nation, Stalin revised this formula and launched a campaign against bourgeois nationalism in the Soviet Union.⁶ This is not to say that tensions between Kabardians and Balkars did not exist during this period. However, part of the reason why Kabardino-Balkar tensions are virtually absent from the historical record was that local Party leaders, following signals from Moscow, were more concerned with

⁴ See Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire* and Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*.

⁵ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 240-49.

⁶ Ibid., 361.

unmasking “great-power chauvinists” and “local nationalists” than highlighting tensions between indigenous titular nationalities.

This shift in nationality policies is evidenced by articles in local newspapers. In the early 1930s, articles singled out Russians for exhibiting “great-power chauvinism.” Often these ethnically framed tensions involved Russian workers reacting negatively to nativization of industry—affirmative-action-style policies that gave preference in hiring in local industry to titular “nationals” at the expense of Russians and other non-titular groups. Accusations of “great-power chauvinism,” as Terry Martin points out, were part of “a rhetoric of abuse that could be (and was) hurled at any Russian...who was felt to be behaving in a colonial manner.”⁷ In the second half of the 1930s, on the other hand, and particularly after Stalin’s speech at the Seventeenth Party Congress in January 1934, where he clarified that “the greatest danger is that deviation against which one ceases to battle and which therefore grows into a danger to the state,”⁸ accusations of bourgeois nationalism gradually grew more frequent in the local press, reaching a peak in late-1937.

On November 28, 1931, *Baksan-Stroi*, the newspaper for the construction site of the Baksan Hydroelectric Dam, featured an article on problems of inter-communal relations and nationalities policy entitled “Firmly Follow the Party’s Leninist Nationalities Policy in the Unceasing Struggle with Great-Power Chauvinism—the principal danger—and local nationalism.” The article rebuked Russian workers for “the rudest manifestations of great-power chauvinism” (*grubeishie proiavleniia velikoderzhavnnogo shovinizma*). According to the article, the head of one of the construction

⁷ Ibid., 126.

⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 361.

site's warehouses, comrade Litvinenko, a Party member, was deservedly fired for shouting obscenities at Kabardian workers and declaring "I cannot work with these illiterate Kabardian dummies." The reporter, Nechiporenko, criticized the local Party cell for not expelling Litvinenko from the Party. Apparently, this was not Litvenenko's first violation of Soviet nationalities policy. Nechiporenko asks, "Why did Litvinenko's systematic persecution of Communist nationals [i.e. national minorities] for almost half a year go unnoticed by the local Party cell?" Nechiporenko also called out the head of the dam's Public Utilities Department, Iaroshchuk, for "ignoring nationals who come to him with questions" and rebuked Iaroshchuk's assistant, comrade Shchur, "who cannot speak to nationals without cursing at them."⁹

In addition to being Kabardino-Balkaria's largest industrial project of the first and second five-year plans, with hundreds of Kabardians and Balkars laboring on the project alongside several thousand Russians, the Baksan Hydroelectric Dam (GES) was one of the most important sites of interethnic contact and nativization policies in 1930s Kabardino-Balkaria.¹⁰ This was a site where "nationals," as non-Russians were referred to, would be exposed to the "more advanced culture" of the Russian proletariat, where a native proletariat would be created, and where Kabardians and Balkars would gain the skills necessary for promotion into leading positions in industrial management and Party

⁹ Al. Nechiporenko, "V neprimirmoi bor'be s velikoderzhavnym shovenizmom—glavnoi opasnost'iu—i mestnym natsionalizmom," *Baskan-Stroi*, November 28, 1931, 3.

¹⁰ For other examples of Stalinist industrialization projects and inter-ethnic relations see, Matt Payne, *Stalin's Railroad: Turksib and the Building of Socialism* (Pittsburg, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 126-55; and Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 72-105.

leadership.¹¹ Despite the robust propaganda campaign against “great-power chauvinists” and the general ideological importance placed on the dam as “a forge... hammering out a national proletariat,”¹² the construction site had great difficulty retaining Kabardian and Balkar workers. Over 78 percent of the Kabardian and Balkar workers at Baksan GES left between 1933 and 1934;¹³ they would often leave the Baksan GES construction site, and other industrial projects, after several months as a result of the hostile attitudes of Russian workers and poor working conditions.¹⁴ The hostile attitudes of some Russian workers toward Kabardian and Balkar workers were partially a result of nationals receiving preference in hiring despite often lacking industrial experience and skills and partially a result of cultural prejudices.

Similar articles criticizing the attitudes of Russian workers toward their new Kabardian and Balkar colleagues abound in *Leninskii Put'*, Kabardino-Balkaria's central newspaper.¹⁵ The most common form of abuse meted out to Kabardian and Balkar workers by Russians was the rubbing of pork fat on lips or the forced consumption of pork. As Martin has discovered in regard to the traditionally Islamic lands of the Soviet

¹¹ With 3,686 workers in 1937, the Baksan Hydroelectric Dam construction project employed as many industrial workers as were employed in the remainder of Kabardino-Balkaria's modest industrial sector. On the importance of the Baksan GES see A.T. Kardanov, *Rabochii klass Kabardino-Balkarii v period stroitel'stva sotsializma (1920-1937)* (Nalchik: Elburs, 1976), 87-119. See also, Kh. Teunov, “Na Baksan GRES,” *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, no. 249 (1936): 3; and A. Vinter, “Gidrostantsiia na Baksane,” *Pravda*, October 26, 1936, 3.

¹² Prezidium sleta udarnikov Baksanstroia, “Baksan GRES dolzhen stroit' kazhdyi trudiashchiisia KBAO,” *Leninskii Put'*, January 12, 1933, 4.

¹³ “Pochemu otmalchivaetsia oblsovprof?,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia*, February 2, 1935, 2.

¹⁴ See, for example, *ibid*; “Natsionaly ukhodiat s proizvodstva,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia*, May 22, 1935, 2; and “O partiino-organizatsionnoi i politicheski-vospitatel'noi rabote na Baksanstroe,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia*, May 30, 1935, 1; “Na Baksanskoe plokhoe gotoviat kadry,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia*, March 27, 1935, 2. and Umar Tuganov, “Sozdat' usloviia rabochemu natsionalu,” *Leninskii Put'*, September 14, 1932, 2.

¹⁵ *Leninskii Put'* or *The Path of Lenin* was published in Kabardian as *Lenin G'uagu* and in Balkar as *Lenin Zhol*. For a history of the development of local journalism in Kabardino-Balkaria see F.Sh. Oshnokova, *Ocherki istorii Kabardino-Balkarskoi zhurnalistiki, 1917-1937* (Nalchik: El'-Fa", 2005).

Union, this was a frequent form of “symbolic violence” and it “was clearly intended to humiliate the Islamic peoples in the most profound way and thereby display Russian dominance on the factory floor.”¹⁶ A July 21 1932 article rebukes the director of the Malka Machine and Tractor Station for doing nothing to stop Russian workers from abusing Kabardians by rubbing pork lard on their bread.¹⁷ Similarly, a September 17 report from a Komsomol member called for the firing of a comrade Soldatov, a senior worker at a local flour factory, for rubbing pork on the mouth of a Kabardian worker, Balkarov. Soldatov, a Russian, suspected the national was not really eating his pork ration, but selling it on the black market.¹⁸ Martin’s observations that both “crude affirmative action” and “the ethnic mixing of previously segregated populations...br[ought] an upsurge in ethnic conflict,”¹⁹ apply perfectly to the situation in Kabardino-Balkaria. To be sure, Kabardians and Balkars had a long history of symbiotic relations with Cossack and Russian peasants. But they had little experience working with and for Russian workers. The industrial workplace—which hardly existed in Kabarda before the revolution—was a new site of inter-communal mixing in Kabardino-Balkaria

In addition to industry, schools were one of the areas where the state was most concerned about interethnic relations and deviations from official nationalities policy. A May 22 1932 article called out comrade Ilinia, a kindergarten teacher assigned to the Balkar District, for complaining about her Balkar pupils’ lack of Russian language skills:

¹⁶ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 154.

¹⁷ “Istoriia odnogo oproverzheniia,” *Leninskii Put’*, July 21, 1932, 4.

¹⁸ Komsomolets, “Ukratit’ shovenista Soldatova,” *Leninskii Put’*, September 17, 1932, 2.

¹⁹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 146.

“Ilina declared, ‘they don’t understand Russian, I don’t want them in my classroom!’ It is comrade Ilina who must be removed from the classroom.”²⁰ An April 10, 1934, *Leninskii Put’* published an Oblast Party decree chastising the Nalchik Party organization for “overlooking chauvinist verbal attacks by groups of Russian school children...directed against the [Kabardian] children of Vol’nyi Aul,” and outlining a series of obligatory measures to “improve the internationalist education [*internatsional’noe vospitanie*] of teachers.”²¹ A People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment inspection report on schools in the North Caucasus singled out a Russian teacher in a Balkar school in Gundelen for telling her students that “lizards bite Balkar children, but do not touch Russian ones” and a teacher in the *stanitsa* Ekaterinogradsk for teaching her students that “the Kabardian kulak is worse than the Russian kulak.” The inspector used these examples to conclude that “in the conditions of a national oblast questions of internationalist education take on paramount importance.”²²

A gradual shift in emphasis from struggling against Russian nationalism (“great-power chauvinism”) toward combating non-Russian nationalisms (“local” or “bourgeois nationalism”) and toward a less mechanical implementation of *korenizatsiia* took place in the mid-1930s. The July 17 1934 issue of *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia* (as *Leninskii Put’* was renamed after Stalin declared the triumph of socialism in the Soviet Union earlier that year), included the first open critique of supposed local nationalist tendencies and crude implementation of *korenizatsiia* in Kabardino-Balkaria. The

²⁰ Sh., “Nel’zia shovenistke poruchat’ vospitanie detei,” *Leninskii Put’*, May 22, 1932, 3.

²¹ “O shovenisticheskoi vylazke gruppy detei goroda: postanovlenie biuro Obkoma VKP(b) ot 7-go aprelia,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia*, March 10, 1934, 3.

²² GARF: A-2306/70/1796 (1932): 20.

newspaper published a speech by Kabardino-Balkar Party Secretary and Civil-War era hero, Betal Kalmykov, warning of the dangers of nationalism and improper implementation of *korenizatsiia*. In particular, Kalmykov singled out the editing house of the newspaper. There were some employees at the newspaper, according to Kalmykov, “who reason in the following way: ‘why isn’t Kabarda just for Kabardians’ and ‘why isn’t Balkaria just for Balkars?’” Kalmykov accused nationals of scheming among each other to replace Russians with natives. “It often begins,” Kalmykov continued, “with individual conversations, then it turns into a general program of local nationalism, then they will openly declare—‘Kabarda for Kabardians, Balkaria for Balkars’ and make other anti-Party and anti-Soviet declarations.” Kalmykov clarified the implications of this rebuke: “This in no way means that we should not conduct *korenizatsiia*, but the heart of *korenizatsiia* should be proletarian internationalism.” Kalmykov finished with a warning that “class vigilance should be directed not only toward the class enemy...it should be directed just as much toward local nationalism.”²³ The publication of this speech did not signal an immediate shift and articles deriding “great-power chauvinist” continued to dominate the press for the next several years. By 1937, however, the tables had turned completely and the local press had orders to unmask bourgeois nationalists. If at first the editor of *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkaria*, Grigorii Petrov, did not pick up on these ideological signals, his firing by Central Committee (TsK) decree in 1937 for “not

²³ “Ocherednye zadachi oblastnoi partiinoi organizatsii v cel’skom khoziastve: Pech; sekretaria VKP(b) tov. B. Kalmykova na 2-om plenum Obkoma partii 2-go iul’ia 1934 goda” *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia*, July 17, 1934, 3.

wishing to actively struggle against bourgeois nationalists,”²⁴ ensured that, going forward, the local press would pursue a vigorous campaign attacking Kabardians and Balkars for bourgeois nationalism.

Petrov’s ouster by TsK decree raises a question: why would Stalin and the Central Committee in Moscow concern themselves with and issue decrees on the content and staff of a local newspaper in Kabardino-Balkaria? The answer to this question lies in the most infamous case of “bourgeois nationalism” and inter-communal tension in 1930s Kabardino-Balkaria—the Sarmakovo affair.

On March 4, 1937, a special *Pravda* correspondent sent a report from Piatigorsk to Moscow on his investigation of rumors, apparently ignored by the local press, that local authorities in the Kabardian village Sarmakovo had deported all non-Kabardians from the village. The unnamed *Pravda* correspondent’s investigations confirmed that the Party and state organs of Kabardino-Balkaria’s Mountain District had ordered the deportation of Russians and Roma from the Kabardian village as part of a larger attempt to remove Russians from the district.²⁵ The local militia turned a blind eye to the affair. While the Kabardino-Balkar newspapers remained silent, *Pravda* published two articles on the Sarmakovo affair.²⁶ After describing the local authorities’ efforts at deporting Russians from Sarmakovo, the *Pravda* reporter ended the first article, published on March 5, with a message to the Kabardino-Balkar leadership: “‘Pravda’ calls the attention of the Kabardino-Balkar Oblast Committee (Obkom) of the VKP(b) to these

²⁴ “Redaktor gazety ‘Sots. Kabardino-Balkarii’ sniat s raboty,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia*, November 20, 1937, 1.

²⁵ “Burzhuznye natsionalisty raspoiasalis,” *Pravda*, March 5, 1937, 6.

²⁶ Ibid. and “‘Burzhuznye natsionalisty raspoiasalis’: Postanovlenie biuro Kabardino-Balkarskogo Obkoma VKP(b) o korrespondentsii, napechatannoi v ‘Pravde’ 5 marta 1937,” *Pravda*, March 11, 1937, 6.

incidences of bourgeois nationalism, which are unheard of under Soviet conditions.”²⁷

Embarrassed, and likely quiet frightened, at being called out in the pages of *Pravda*, the Kabardino-Balkar leadership launched an immediate investigation into the affair. The author of the next article, from March 11, was Betal Kalmykov, First Secretary of the Kabardino-Balkar Obkom.²⁸ He provided further details of the affair (those marked for deportation had recently arrived in Sarmakovo from other districts and represented a variety of non-native nationalities; and the deportations were only prevented at the last minute by the Mountain District NKVD) and provided the text of a decree removing all involved from their posts and from the Party. Kalmykov explained:

this upsetting incident of bourgeois nationalism became possible only because the Party organization of the Mountain District and its secretary Bekishev weakened their struggle with local nationalism, forgetting comrade Stalin’s admonition at the Seventeenth Party Congress that ‘the greatest danger is that deviation against which one ceases to battle.’²⁹

The Sarmakovo affair led to a forceful campaign against bourgeois nationalists in the Kabardino-Balkar press. In late 1937, as the purges struck national intelligentsias throughout the Soviet Union, *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia* featured numerous articles uncovering bourgeois nationalists and rebuking local officials for their liberal attitude toward known bourgeois nationalists.³⁰ Indeed, an article on the firing of the

²⁷ “Burzhuaznye natsionalisty raspoiasalis’.”

²⁸ “‘Burzhuaznye natsionalisty raspoiasalis’: Postanovlenie.”

²⁹ Ibid. This decree was also published in *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia* on March 11 as “O korrespondentsii v razete ‘Pravde’—‘Burzhuaznye natsionalisty raspoiasalis’—Postanovlenie Kabardino-Balkarskogo Obkoma ot 9-go marta.

³⁰ “Reshitel’nyi iskoreniat’ burzhuaznykh natsionalistov,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia*, November 21, 1937, 1; “Baksanskii raikom komsomola ne razoblachaet posledstviia burzhuaznykh natsionalistov,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia*, November 28, 1937, 3; “Do kontsa razoblachit’ burzhuaznogo natsionalista Sasikova,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia*, December, 4, 1937, 4; “Liberal’nichaiut s burzhuaznymi natsionalistami,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia*, December 15,

editor of *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia* explained that “Petrov demonstrated rotten liberalism and political short-sightedness in the struggle against bourgeois nationalists...Petrov often covered up the sabotage of enemies of the people and delayed or ignored the investigation of workers’ letters unmasking bourgeois nationalists.”³¹

Significantly, these campaigns against supposed “bourgeois nationalists” targeted Kabardian and Balkar officials in proportion to each ethnicity’s share of the population. There is no evidence to suggest that this policy of proportional repression was a conscious policy, but it shows the nationalist purge did not discriminate among the titular nationalities.

Indeed, the Kabardino-Balkar government, Party, and security organs applied both repressive “hardline” policies (purges of national intelligentsias) and more benign “softline” policies (nativization) to the communities of Kabardino-Balkar in relative proportion to their share of the total population.³² In terms of hardline policies of repression, the purges of Kabardino-Balkaria’s Party apparatus and the attendant unmasking of secret “counter-revolutionary” groups—labeled anything from Trotskyist to Bukharinist to bourgeois nationalist to all of the above depending on timing—affected Kabardians, Kabardino-Balkaria’s largest community, the most. Indeed, in 1927, Betal Kalmykov, a Kabardian, directed the first “counter-revolutionary” purge campaign within the Kabardino-Balkar Party organization exclusively against Kabardians—Zarakush

1937, 4; “Do kontsa likvidirovat’ posledstviia vreditel’sstva,” *Sotsialisticheskaia Kabardino-Balkariia*, September 2, 1937, 3.

³¹ “Reshitel’nyi iskoreniat; burzhaznykh natsionalistov.”

³² In explaining the seeming contradictions in Soviet policies toward its ethnic minorities Terry Martin distinguishes between hard and soft-line policies and the Soviet institutions that carried them out. See Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 21-22.

Midov, Nazir Katkhanov, Batyi Khuranov, Dul' Shekikhachev, Kasym Shogentsukov.³³ Throughout the purges only two of about a dozen major campaigns targeted high-placed Balkar leaders, the "Gemuevshchina" (Ako Gemuev) in 1931 and the "Ul'bashevshchina" (Kellet Ul'bashev) in 1935.³⁴ Frequent purges affected local Party cells throughout Kabardino-Balkaria equally.

Soft-line, affirmative-action-style policies related to *korenizatsiia* affected Kabardians, Balkars, and Kabardino-Balkaria's non-Russian minorities (Germans, Kumyks, Mountain Jews, and Ossetians) in relative proportion to each group's share of the population.³⁵ These policies included state support for non-Russian cultures and languages; the translation of local government and Party work into native languages; and the promotion of members of titular nationalities in government, education, industry, and culture. No major studies have been done on the application of affirmative-action policies in the Soviet Union's dual- or multi-titular republics and oblasts (most of which are located in the North Caucasus). But, if we take differences in modernization levels in multiethnic societies as a cause of conflict, then the balanced application of *korenizatsiia* to both titular ethnicities—Kabardians and Balkars—instead of a favoring of the Kabardian majority promoted inter-communal stability in Kabardino-Balkaria. In its relatively balanced application to Kabardians and Balkars, *korenizatsiia* in 1930s Kabardino-Balkaria validated the power-sharing agreement between the Kabardian and

³³ "Otkliki 6-go s"ezda sovetov na novyiu vylazku kontrevoliutsionnoi gruppy oblasti" *Karakhalk*, March 3, 1927, 3.

³⁴ RGASPI 17/21/1238 (1937): 21-24.

³⁵ For data see, for example, GARF 1235/105/450 (1927-1929): 12-20; GARF 1235/131/26: 110-11; GARF 1235/141/1024: 30-37; GARF 1235/124/29 (1929-1931): 41-46; GARF 1235/124/93 (1932): 1-61. GARF A2306/75/2446 (1935): 53; TsGA KBR 8/2/13: 22-26; TsGA KBR 2/1/634 (1929-1932): 83-158; TsGA KBR 4/1/221: 1-95.

Balkar leaderships during the administrative unification of the two peoples in 1922. In the 1930s, the political relationship between Kabardians and Balkars did not produce obvious benefits for either community at the expense of the other.

The absence of conflict between Kabardians and Balkars during this period may be an illusion created by the ideological lens of the Soviet press and the Party that controlled it. When attacking deviations from the Party line, the Kabardino-Balkar Party organization reacted to ideological signals from above. These signals included exhortations to fight against bourgeois nationalism and great-power chauvinism, they did not, however, take into consideration the nuances of the relationship between two titular groups within the same republic. Highlighting conflict between Kabardians and Balkars would not demonstrate obedience to the Party line. Rather, it would attract unwanted attention from Moscow and demonstrate that the Kabardino-Balkar leadership's ineffectiveness at maintaining the tenets of inter-communal cooperation upon which Kabardino-Balkaria was founded. Nevertheless, not only does conflict between Kabardians and Balkars not figure in newspaper reports, the minutes of Obkom and Raikom meetings from local and central archives also do not demonstrate significant tensions or conflicts between Kabardians and Balkars between 1928 and 1941. There was relative calm in the relations between Kabardians and Balkars during this period.

Collectivization, Repression, and Resistance

Compared with their Chechen neighbors, Kabardians and, more importantly given our efforts to understand the reasons for their deportation, Balkars offered far less overt

resistance toward Soviet policies, such as collectivization, the repression of the Islamic clergy, and the closure of religious schools and mosques. Though, to be sure, resistance was greater in the national oblasts and republics of the North Caucasus than in Russian-majority regions. Moreover, it was Kabardians, a group *not deported* during World War Two, rather than Balkars, who figured in most incidences of violent resistance and “banditry” in the late-1920s and early 1930s. Indeed, until his death at the hands of Kabardino-Balkar OGPU in 1928, Temirkan Shipshev, a former Kabardian prince, led one of the most notorious bands of *abreks* (brigands) in the North Caucasus.³⁶ Scholars have argued that the deportation of the Chechens during World War Two was a form of “population politics” used to deal with an ethnicity that demonstrated particularly strong resistance, through frequent armed uprisings and sustained support of insurgent groups, to Soviet social and cultural transformations.³⁷ This policy of deportation to remove an overtly restive population was not the case with Kabardians and Balkars.

Balkars played but a minor role in the Kabardian-led Baksan Uprising of 1928, the largest rebellion against Soviet rule in Kabardino-Balkaria. When violence erupted in the summer of 1928 tensions had been brewing over Soviet economic and religious policies. Predominantly Kabardian villagers in the Baksan District were upset at compulsory grain requisitions, the beginnings of collectivization, the closure of mosques and Islamic schools, and the repression of respected members of the local clergy.

³⁶ G.K. Dzuev, *Bez prava na obzhalovanie: dokumental'nye ocherki po materialam ChK, GPU, NKVD, KGB, FSB 1920-1940 gg.* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 2012), 97-118.

³⁷ See, for example, Peter Holquist, “To Count, to Extract, and to Exterminate: Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia,” in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 111-44.

The locus of resistance during the summer of 1928 was Baksan District, the heartland of Greater Kabarda. Baksan had a strong tradition of Islamic education and the recently repressed leaders of the so-called “Sharia movement” came from this region. These “Shariaists” (*shariatisty*), led by Nazir Katkhanov, were civil-war-era pro-Bolshevik heroes who advocated the blending of Islamic law with Marxist-Leninist ideology.³⁸ Ultimately, it was the use of forced labor on a canal construction project during the middle of the summer harvest that triggered the uprising. On the evening of June 9, the head of the Baksan Executive Committee (Ispolkom) and local militia arrested seven villagers from Kyzburun 2 (Islamei) for refusing to work on the canal. At six the following morning, the adult population of Kyzburun 2 marched on the town of Baksan, the district administrative center where the seven villagers were being detained. Joined by disgruntled villagers from surrounding Kabardian auls, a crowd as large as several thousand surrounded the Ispolkom offices. The crowd, calling for “Sharia law and the elimination of Communists,” stormed the building, raiding a weapons cache and liberating the seven prisoners.³⁹ A four-day standoff between the rebellious Kabardian villagers, temporarily in control of the town of Baksan, and Soviet security services followed. On June 14 the government sent Red Army divisions to Baksan to put down the uprising—a task accomplished with ease.⁴⁰ Soviet security services punished 118 people for participation in the Baksan Uprising: the OGPU executed 20 people on the spot; a further 11 were sentenced to death and executed later and the remainder served sentences

³⁸ On Katkhanov and his ideology see Kerim Katkhanov, *Nazyr: Kniga ob ottse* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 2008).

³⁹ G.K. Dzuev, *Krovavoe leto 1928-goda: ocherki* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1997) 38-39.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

in the Gulag.⁴¹ Though gradually attracting the support of some surrounding Balkar auls and Cossack *stanitsy*, the rebellion remained a predominately Kabardian affair. Of the four major incidences of armed resistance in Kabardino-Balkaria during the late 1920s and early 1930s, only one occurred in the Balkar District.⁴²

To be sure, Soviet socio-economic and cultural-religious policies evoked an equally negative reaction from the Balkar population of Kabardino-Balkaria as from the Oblast's Kabardian population. However, one of the reasons for the lower incidence of *violent mass resistance* among Balkars was that the collectivization of stockbreeding in Kabardino-Balkaria occurred four to five years after the collectivization of agriculture in the Oblast. Soviet authorities only forced the stockbreeding families of Balkaria to collectivize their sheep and cattle in 1934, long after the Kabardian plains had been fully collectivized and Soviet security forces had brutally put down associated resistance (as in the case of the Baksan Uprising). News of resistance in neighboring regions, such as Terek District and Ingushetia, helped fuel Kabardian resistance to collectivization. By the time the Balkars faced collectivization, neighboring plains regions had been pacified and there appeared to be little hope for the isolated Balkars to conduct a successful resistance movement. Acts of passive resistance—the mass selling off and slaughter of livestock—rather than overt attacks on Soviet power came to characterize the struggle to collectivize the Balkars' mountain valleys. The Balkars gave up their cattle and joined collectivized brigades (*artely*) of shepherds only reluctantly and, when an opportunity to reverse

⁴¹ Ibid., 44.

⁴² G.Kh. Mambetov and Z.G. Mambetov, *Sotsial'nye protivorechiia v Kabardino-Balkarskoe derevne v 20-30-e gody* (Nalchik: Izdatel'stvo KBNTs RAN, 2009), 172-215.

collectivization arose during the Nazi occupation, the Balkars redistributed their cattle among households with great enthusiasm.⁴³ But in the 1930s, the Balkars remained comparatively docile before Soviet power and there is no reason to conclude that they had garnered a reputation, as the Chechens had, for being especially resistant to Soviet rule.

Administrative-Territorial Transformations and Kabardino-Balkar Relations

The 1930s witnessed a series of transformations of the internal administrative borders within Kabardino-Balkaria and, in 1936, the passing of the new Stalin Constitution was accompanied by the promotion of a number of Autonomous Oblasts, including Kabardino-Balkaria, to the nominally higher administrative status of Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR). These transformations reflect larger administrative and ideological concerns of the Stalinist regime rather than local ethnic politics. In the post-Soviet period, however, Balkar national elites, advocating the separation of Balkaria from Kabardino-Balkaria, have claimed that some of the border changes during this period were part of a long-term effort by the Kabardian leadership to weaken the Balkars' territorial sovereignty and their ability to defend their national interests. According to a March 1993 article by the Working Group of the National Council of the Balkar People (NSBN), the administrative structure of Kabardino-Balkaria as codified in the 1937 Constitution of the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR "established a unitary nation-state structure for the Republic." This unitary status, the authors continue, "disregarded the fact that

⁴³Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI) 6/6/1611 (1943): 200-09.

from its inception Kabardino-Balkaria was formed from two constituent parts—Balkaria and Kabarda—and [the constitution] did not provide a mechanism for these constituent territories to defend their interests.”⁴⁴

The NSBN may be correct in arguing that Kabardino-Balkaria’s administrative structure did not provide the Balkars with a means to effectively represent and defend their interests on a Republican level. However, as we have seen, its claim that Kabardino-Balkaria was formed through the amalgamation of two autonomous territories on an equal basis is not accurate. From its inception, there was no legislation enshrining the territorial integrity of a distinct Balkar territory and preventing changes to its administrative borders. Balkaria—the areas of compact Balkars settlement—entered the newly formed Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast with the status of a district equal to the Oblast’s other districts.⁴⁵ Partly as an effort to overcome the complexities of the land question (i.e. the fact that Kabardian and Balkar shepherds used pastures scattered throughout the republic), the Soviet state applied national autonomy to Kabardino-Balkaria as a whole but not to its constituent districts in the form of a multi-ethnic federation. For example, the trans-Malka mountain pastures of the Kabardian-majority Mountain (later Zolka) District were shared, as they historically had been, among all shepherds of Kabardino-Balkaria according to need rather than nationality. For purposes of administrative efficiency (particularly, in terms of implementing *korenizatsiia* and other nationality policies), and as a result of historic patterns of settlement, the districts of

⁴⁴ Rabochaia gruppa Natsional’nogo soveta balkarskogo naroda, “Narod i vremia: problema Balkarii na fone konseptsii o natsional’no-gosudarstvennom pereustroistve respubliki,” *Tere: balkarskii forum*, no. 24, March 1993.

⁴⁵ “Ob”edinenie Kabardy i Balkarii,” *Krasnaia Kabarda*, August 23, 1922, 1.

Kabardino-Balkar roughly corresponded to zones of compact Kabardian, Balkar, and Russian settlement. During the first decade and a half of Soviet rule, some of these districts temporarily held the names of their majority ethnicity: Balkar District (1922-1935); Lesser-Kabardian District (1921-1935), and Cossack District (1925-1928). But the names and borders of these districts changed frequently throughout the Soviet period. If each district did not have an ethno-territorial status tied to one ethnicity, each village provided ethno-territorial autonomy for a specific nationality—its majority nationality. For example, Balkar-majority villages in Kabardian-majority districts had schooling and, to the extent possible, administration in the Balkar language. The expansion of village-level ethno-territorial autonomy matches “the ethno-territorial proliferation” of the 1920s described by Terry Martin.⁴⁶ But in Kabardino-Balkaria, the commitment to providing village-level ethno-territorial autonomy did not dissipate as it did throughout the Soviet Union by the late 1930s because Kabardians and Balkars were titular nationalities.

The changes to Kabardino-Balkaria’s administrative-territorial structure during the 1930s were largely in line with larger all-union trends and policies.⁴⁷ In 1935 the government dissolved the Balkar District replacing it with three smaller ones: Chegem, Cherek, and Elbrus. In 1938 the government separated the Khulam and Bezengi societies from Cherek District, the most populous of the Balkar districts, to form Khulam-Bezengi

⁴⁶ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 33.

⁴⁷ The first change to the borders of the Balkar District came in the 1920s and was a product of local politics, rather than all-union policies. In 1924 the Kabardino-Balkar Executive Committee transferred the Balkar village Khabaz from the jurisdiction of Balkar District to the newly created Mountain District. Khabaz was formed from the resettlement of landless Balkars in the 1880s after the Peasant Reforms and was not connected territorially to the rest of Balkaria. Rather it was situated on the sparsely-populated mountain pastures next to the Kabardian village of Karmovo (Kammenomostskoe) and relatively close to the Karachai village of Khasaut. As discussed in chapter four, the creation of the Mountain District was part of the Kabardino-Balkar leadership’s strategy for preserving the mountain pastures from Karachai claims.

District. That same year the Balkar village of Tashly-Tala and the Balkar settlement attached to the Lesken light factory were transferred to the newly-formed Lesken District, which had a Kabardian majority. These administrative changes were all part of an all-union policy of *razukrupnenie raionov*: the dividing up of districts into smaller units. The ultimate goal of this policy was to bring Soviet and Party administrative, cultural, and political institutions closer to the people and to allow for the establishment of tighter control over village life by central and republican Soviet authorities.⁴⁸ The administrative-territorial changes associated with *razukrupnenie* affected each of Kabardino-Balkaria's communities equally—the Kabardino-Balkar leadership, based on directives from Moscow, divided up both Kabardian-majority and Balkar-majority districts into smaller units and broke up larger villages into smaller ones.⁴⁹ More importantly, the division of the Balkar District into smaller districts did not violate the original conditions on which the Balkars entered into a shared Autonomous Oblast with the Kabardians. Finally, these new districts still contained overwhelming Balkar pluralities.

Kabardino-Balkaria under Nazi Occupation: The Collapse of the Soviet Order

In order to understand the causes of the temporary rupture in inter-communal relations brought on by the deportation of the Balkar people from the territory of Kabardino-Balkaria, we must focus both on events and processes during the Second World War and

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the purposes of *razukrupnenie* in Kabardino-Balkaria see GARF 1235/131/26 (1936): 112-13.

⁴⁹ For documents evidence of the effects of *razukrupnenie* in Kabardino-Balkaria see chapter three in *Administrativno-territorial'nye preobrazovaniia*, 119-298.

the long-term evolution of Soviet “population politics” and ethnic cleansing.⁵⁰ Larger geo-political concerns, and Stalin’s paranoia, interacted with long-standing practices of state violence to produce ethnic cleansing. This interaction led the Soviet security services to respond to the development of local anti-Soviet insurgencies during the war among peoples whom the Stalinist regime already viewed as untrustworthy by deporting entire ethnicities.

The Development of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing

The turn to mass deportation during World War Two was not new. As Peter Holquist demonstrates, before the Soviet Union, Tsarist officials, similar to colonial officials in other European empires, practiced population politics and often relied on ethnic deportations and resettlement to re-engineer the ethno-social makeup of their empire. Military colonial officials sought to secure their imperial peripheries by removing communities deemed “undesirable” or “unreliable” and replacing them with “trustworthy” elements, usually the core population of the Empire.⁵¹

Among other earlier cases, in the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire practiced this type of population politics in the northwest Caucasus along the Black Sea littoral at the end of the Russo-Caucasian Wars. In 1860 Viceroy Bariatinskii decided to conclude the conquest of Caucasia by forcing the long-resisting Circassian mountaineers to flee their auls and either resettle to the Kuban plains inside Cossack cordons or

⁵⁰ On Soviet ethnic cleansing see Terry Martin, “The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing,” *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998): 813-61.

⁵¹ Ibid; Holquist, “To Count, to Extract, and to Exterminate,” 115-16; see also the works referenced in footnote two of this chapter.

immigrate to the Ottoman Empire. From 1860 to 1864 alone over half a million native Circassians left their auls in the northwest Caucasus under duress for the Ottoman Empire, with tens of thousands dying en route. In constructing a new society for the ethnically-cleansed northwest Caucasus, the tsarist state pursued a policy of what Dana Lyn Sherry calls “social alchemy”: the “creat[ion]...by colonial officials...of an ideal society...from scratch” based on “ideas about ethnicity, geography, and the government’s [economic and political] goals for the region.”⁵² That is, Russian colonial administrators wanted to settle the Black Sea coast with both a loyal Russian core element and other loyal communities that could easily adapt to the region’s ecological conditions in order more effectively tap its economic potential, namely Greeks and Armenians.⁵³ The tsarist state turned to population politics again during the First World War. The Russian military, suspicious of the loyalties of diaspora nationalities whose compatriots resided in neighboring states with whom Russia was at war, deported about one million of these minorities—particularly Germans, Jews, Poles from the Western borderlands and Muslim groups from the South Caucasus—to the interior of the Empire.⁵⁴

Soviet Russia would turn to the same tactics of deporting “enemy nations” used by its tsarist predecessor, but with a totality and absence of restraint characteristic of the modern interventionist states of the twentieth century.

With the possible exception of the “de-Cossackization” campaign of the civil-war era (when the Soviet state sanctioned the deportations of Cossacks from the Don, Terek,

⁵² Dana Lyn Sherry, “Imperial Alchemy: Resettlement, Ethnicity, and Governance in the Russian Caucasus, 1828-1865” (Ph.d. diss., University of California-Davis, 2007), 138

⁵³ Ibid., 138-47.

⁵⁴ Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

and Kazakh steppe regions),⁵⁵ the population politics of deportation practiced by the Soviet Union initially targeted groups based on social class rather than ethnicity. By deporting or executing relatively better-off peasants and their families, the population politics of dekulakization focused on removing “socially-alien elements” from the countryside throughout the Soviet Union. In the early 1930s Soviet security organs deported several million people to special settlements in their campaign “to liquidate the Kulaks as a class.”⁵⁶

By the mid-1930s geo-political tensions between the Soviet Union and most of its neighbors produced a spike in “Soviet xenophobia”—characterized by a fear of encirclement and infiltration by hostile capitalist and imperialist nations—and ultimately led the Soviet state to shift the focus of its population politics of deportation from class enemies to enemy nations. In the early 1930s Soviet population politics began to take on an ethnic emphasis when Soviet security organs targeted *specific ethnicities* for increased dekulakization measures.⁵⁷ By the mid-1930s, however, Soviet xenophobia led to full-on ethnic cleansing of border regions. Soviet ethnic cleansing began with the deportation to Kazakhstan of 45,000 Poles and Germans from border regions of the Ukrainian SSR in early 1936.⁵⁸ Next, in 1937, as tensions mounted between the Soviet Union and Japan, NKVD forces deported the entire Korean population (171,781 people) of the Soviet Far

⁵⁵ With the exception of the Don Cossacks, the deportations of Cossack communities from the North Caucasus and Kazakhstan were local-level initiatives sparked by efforts of decolonization by local indigenous elites. The Soviet state was quick to repudiate these decossackization policies. On decossackization, particularly in the Don region, see Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution*, 166-205.

⁵⁶ Lynn Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: the Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵⁷ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 327-30.

⁵⁸ “Sovershenno sekretno: Zamestitel’iu predsetatel’ia SNK Soiuz SSR tov. Chubariu V. Ia.,” in *Posledeniia pravitel’stva Soiuz SSR*, 201-02; on these deportations, see also, Brown, *Biography of No Place*, 134-52 and *passim*.

East to Central Asia.⁵⁹ The deportation to Kazakhstan of Persians from Azerbaijan's borderland with Iran followed in 1938.⁶⁰

This move to deport entire ethnicities from border regions entailed the triumph Soviet xenophobia over of what Terry Martin calls the "Piedmont Principle."⁶¹ This latter principle was the belief that Soviet national autonomy for diaspora nationalities (in the form of national village Soviets and districts) and state support for their cultures would allow the Soviet Union to serve as a national center—as Piedmont did during the unification of Italy—around which the rest of a given ethnicity-*cum*-nation would rally. The Soviet Union would, its leaders hoped, serve as a motor for the future unification, under a Soviet or at least pro-Soviet framework, of territorially divided national communities. The goal of the "ethnophilia" exhibited by Soviet nationality policies in border regions was the projection of a positive image of the Soviet Union abroad,⁶² particularly among communities on the other side of the Soviet border, in hopes of extending Soviet influence and paving the way for possible territorial expansion.⁶³ By the mid-1930s, the Stalinist regime had gone from seeing diaspora communities and "cross-border ethnic ties" as tools for the projection of Soviet influence abroad to seeing them as a tool for foreign states to infiltrate the Soviet Union for nefarious purposes.⁶⁴ This shift was the result of failures of the Piedmont Principle during collectivization—failures which first became visible to Stalin in the Soviet West through Poles and other groups

⁵⁹ "Sovershenno sekretno: Predsedatel'iu SNK Soiuzu SSR tov. Molotovu V. M.," in *ibid.*, 135.

⁶⁰ "Sovershenno sekretno: Vypiska iz sutochnoi raportichki NKVD; Ezhov tov. Molotovu," in *ibid.*, 183-84.

⁶¹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 9.

⁶² The term "ethnophilia" comes from Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment," 415.

⁶³ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 315-16.

trying to emigrate from the Soviet Union.⁶⁵ The perception among the Soviet leadership that the Soviet Union had failed in its efforts to project its influence across its borders, first and foremost in Polish-controlled western Ukraine (Galicia), led to the final abandonment of the Piedmont Principle amid growing fears of foreign infiltration throughout the Soviet borderlands and particularly by Ukrainian nationalists in Soviet Ukrainian.⁶⁶

Soviet xenophobia only increased with the outbreak of the Second World War as perceived “enemy nations” became real ones; deportations increased accordingly.⁶⁷ Not trusting the allegiances of representatives of nationalities whose titular states the Soviet Union was either at war with or occupying—Finns, Germans, Lithuanians, Estonians, and Latvians—the Soviet security organs subjected these ethnicities to varying degrees of mass deportation. Among the Baltic peoples, “anti-Soviet” and “socially alien” elements and their families faced deportation as the Stalinist regime struggled to root out resistance in and apply collectivization and dekulakization policies to its new territorial annexations.⁶⁸ In 1940 and 1941, the NKVD cleansed its northwestern border regions with Finland, including Leningrad’s suburbs and Murmansk, of most of its non-Russian populations.⁶⁹ The Stalinist regime dissolved the Soviet German autonomous territories

⁶⁵ Ibid., 320-21.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 325-28.

⁶⁷ Alexander Statiev, “Soviet Ethnic Deportations: Intent vs. Outcome,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 11(nos. 2-3) (2009): 243-64.

⁶⁸ “Dikretiva o vyselenii sotsial’no-chuzhdogo elementa iz respublik Pribaltiki, Zapadnoi Ukrainy i Zapadnoi Belorussii i Moldavii. 14 maia 1941 g.,” in *Po resheniiu pravitsel’stva Soiuzs SSR (Deportsiia narodov: dokumenty i materialy)*, eds. N.F. Bugai and A.M. Gonov (Nalchik: El’-Fa”, 2003), 654.

⁶⁹ “Prikaz Narkoma vnutrennikh del SSSR No 00761 za 1940 g. O pereselenii iz g. Murmansk i Murmanskoi oblasti grazhdan inonatsional’nostei. 20 liunia 1940 g.,” in *ibid.*, 358; “Sovershenno sekretno. O vyselenii iz progorodov Leningrada naseleniia nemetskoi i finskoi natsional’nosteo. 28 avgusta 1941 g.,” in *ibid.*, 359.

including their largest one, the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of the Volga Germans, and security organs deported the entire Soviet German population to Siberia and Central Asia.⁷⁰ Indeed, the first war-time ethnic deportations in Kabardino-Balkaria affected the German colonists. In October 1941, the forces of the NKVD deported the republic's 5,803 Germans⁷¹ and its five German settlements were renamed: Brunental' became Oktiabr'skoe, Gnadenburg became Vinogradnoe, Gofnungsfel'd became Krasnoarmeiskoe, Eben-Etser became Sovetskoe, and Aleksandrovskaiia colony was incorporated into the city of Nalchik.⁷² In 1944, as tension rose between Turkey and the Soviet Union, the NKVD deported entire diaspora communities of Kurds, Meskhetian Turks, and Hemshins (Armenian Muslims) from the Georgian SSR.⁷³

During the war, the Stalinist regime also grew increasingly suspicious of ethnicities that had demonstrated notable resistance to Soviet religious-cultural and economic policies in the 1920s and 1930s. In general, the non-Russians of the Soviet peripheries, especially Islamic peoples, including Caucasian mountaineers, exhibited greater resistance to collectivization and Soviet assaults on religion than the Russian core.⁷⁴ Stalin's growing mistrust of non-Russian minorities during the war, especially if they were Muslim, is evidenced by the Red Army's exclusion in the summer of 1942 of Caucasian Mountaineer nationalities (Kabardians, Balkars, Ingush, Chechens, and

⁷⁰ "Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Soiuz SSR. O pereselenii nemtsev, prochibaiushchikh v raionakh Povolzh'ia," in *ibid.*, 249.

⁷¹ "Spravka komissariata vnutrennikh del Soiuz SSR o vyselenii nemtsev s sentiabria 1941 g.," in *ibid.*, 271.

⁷² "Ukaz prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR o pereimenovanii nekotorykh naselennykh punktov i sel'skikh sovetov KBASSR," in *Administrativno-territorial'noe preobrazovaniia v Kabardino-Balkarii*, 336.

⁷³ "Prikaz NKVD Soiuz SSR za 1944 g. O pereselenii iz pograniichnykh raionov Gruzinskoi SSR turok, kurdov, i khemshinov. 20 sentiabria 1944 g.," in *Po resheniiu pravitel'stva Soiuz SSR*, 613.

⁷⁴ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 321.

Dagestani peoples) from conscription. In October 1943 the Red Army stopped conscripting all “local nationalities” from the North Caucasus, Transcaucasia, and Central Asia. These were the very nationalities whose loyalties the tsarist state also viewed with suspicion and, accordingly, exempted from military service.⁷⁵ Officially, the Red Army offered no explanation for its ending of conscription of these nationalities. Unofficially, the Stalinist leadership viewed these non-Slavic Soviet nationalities as “hostile and unreliable elements.”⁷⁶

Why Balkars?

For all of the Stalinist regime’s increased mistrust of local nationalities in the Caucasus, Crimea, Central Asia and elsewhere along the empire’s peripheries, there is a great difference between ending conscription of representatives of various “untrustworthy” (*neblagonadezhnye*) ethnicities and deporting en masse entire ethnicities on trumped-up charges of collective treason.⁷⁷ For most of the “punished peoples” of the Soviet Union—those nationalities deported en masse by Stalin during the war—several other factors would align to seal their fates. First, the front—and thus the borders of Soviet control—would approach their autonomous territories and most of these territories would then come under Nazi occupation. Second, fears of a Turkish invasion of the Soviet Union would cause the Stalinist regime to view most of these ethnicities—given their ethno-

⁷⁵ Joshua Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 141.

⁷⁶ A.M. Bezugol’nyi, *Narody Kavkaza i Krasnaia Armiia, 1918-1945* (Moscow: “Veche”, 2007), 184, 208.

⁷⁷ For a synthetic essay on the historiography on the Stalinist national operations and deportations of nationalities see Yaacov Ro’i, “The Transformation of Historiography on the ‘Punished Peoples’,” *History & Memory* vol.21 no. 2 (2009): 150-76; see also, Naimark.

linguistic and religious ties with Turkey—as potential fifth columns. What role did these factors play in the specific case of the deportation of the Balkars from Kabardino-Balkaria?

On April 8, 1944, one month after the mass deportation of the Balkars to Central Asia, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR *post-facto* decreed the deportation of the Balkars. The official explanation for the deportation was the high incidence of collaboration with the Nazi occupiers during the war. According to the Decree, the Balkars were being deported:

in connection with the fact that, during the period of occupation of the territory of the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR by the Germano-fascist invaders, many Balkars betrayed their motherland, entered into armed detachments organized by the Germans, conducted diversionary actions against Red Army divisions, helped the fascist occupiers in the capacity of guides on the Caucasian passes, and, after the expulsion of the enemies armies from the territory of the Caucasus by the Red Army, entered into German-organized bands for the struggle against Soviet power.⁷⁸

As Khadzhi-Murat Sabanchiev, the major historian of the Balkar deportation, argues, “at a time when the vast majority of the male population of fighting age was serving at the front it is absurd to accuse to Balkars of mass treason.” Therefore, he continues, “collaboration is not...the reason for the deportation but an excuse for the deportation.”⁷⁹

Based on available material, it is impossible to be completely certain of the driving reasons behind the brutal mass deportations of the Balkars and other peoples (Karachai, Ingush, Chechens, Crimean Tatars, and Kalmyks) on charges of mass treason

⁷⁸ “Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR ot 12 oktiabria 1943 g.” in *Tak eto bylo: natsional'nye repressii v SSSR 1919-1952 gody. tom. I.* ed. Svetlana Alieva. (Moscow: Rossiiskii mezhdunarodnyi fond kul'tury, 1993), 258; and “Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Soiuz SSR O pereselenii balkartsev, prozhivaiushchikh v Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR i o pereimenovanii Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR v Kabardinskuiu ASSR. 8 apreliia 1944 g.” in *Po resheniiu pravitel'stva Soiuz SSR*, 500.

⁷⁹ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 59.

during the Second World War; but the perceptions of the Soviet leadership, particularly Stalin and NKVD chief Lavrentii Beria, provide an explanation for the deportations more efficacious than the official Stalinist justification.⁸⁰ In particular, extreme Soviet xenophobia—“the exaggerated...fear of foreign influence and foreign contamination...spurred on by an ideological hatred and suspicion of foreign capitalist governments”⁸¹—during World War Two and a long-standing suspicion of the loyalties of restive borderlands communities in the Caucasus and elsewhere led Soviet policymakers to view some ethnicities as threats to Soviet state security. The Stalinist bureaucrat-policeman state used techniques of population politics to combat these perceived threats.

By 1944 a confluence of factors led the Stalinist leadership to view the Balkars as a security threat. First, they were “untrustworthy” because they were Caucasian mountaineers. From the 1930s through the Second World War, of all the native regions of the North Caucasus, only Checheno-Ingushetia witnessed a broad-based insurgency. In other republics of the North Caucasus there were only small groups of insurgents and active resistance was not a mass phenomenon.⁸² Nevertheless, long-standing popular perceptions of mountaineers as fiercely anti-Russian (given their long history of resistance to tsarist rule), the *marginally* higher rate of anti-Soviet resistance in the region generally, and the severe problems of controlling Checheno-Ingushetia, led the Soviet

⁸⁰I share Alexander Statiev’s view that, however genocidal the outcomes, the deportations of nationalities were products of Soviet social-engineering policies rather than attempted genocides. See Statiev, “Soviet Ethnic Deportations: Intent vs. Outcome,” 243-64.

⁸¹Martin, “Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing,” 860.

⁸²S.I. Lints, *Severnyi Kavkaz nakanune i v period nemetsko-fashistskoi okkupatsii: sostoianie i osobennosti razvitiia (iul’ 1942 – oktiabr’ 1943 gg.)* (Rostov-on-Don: Izd-vo SKNTS VSh, 2003), 16.

state, which had begun to associate itself with the Russian nation at an unprecedented level during the war, to lump mountaineer nationalities together as “untrustworthy elements.”⁸³ In a self-fulfilling prophecy, the fact that Kabardino-Balkaria fell to the German armies only reinforced the “untrustworthiness” of its mountaineer population.

The Balkars’ mountain valleys also exhibited historical agency in the fate of the Balkar people. Of particular concern for the Soviet political and military leaderships was the Germans’ occupation of the strategic mountain passes leading across the Caucasus range into Georgia. Should the Germans cross the mountains, they would have had a relatively open path to the oil fields of Baku, particularly because the bulk of Soviet military forces in the south were concentrated on the defense of Stalingrad. After an alpinist detachment of the German army scaled Mount Elbrus in late August, the passes into Georgia seemingly lay open to Nazi invasion. It was only at great human cost that, during the autumn of 1942, the Red Army was able to halt the German Army’s advance across the mountains into the South Caucasus.⁸⁴ Rather than accept the blame for not protecting the Elbrus region, Soviet military and political officials unjustly passed the blame onto the peoples inhabiting the mountain regions in the vicinity of the passes: the culturally and linguistically related Karachai and Balkar peoples. As we have seen, Stalin and Beria accused the Karachai and Balkars of guiding the fascist armies along the perilous mountain passes and conducting diversion in the Soviet rear.⁸⁵ Sabanchiev convincingly

⁸³ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 46.

⁸⁴ A.A. Grechko, *Bitva za Kavkaz* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1967), 200-14.

⁸⁵ “Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR ot 12 oktiabria 1943 g.” 258; and “Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Soiuz SSR O pereselenii balkartsev, prozhivaiushchikh v Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR i o pereimenovanii Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR v Kabardinskuiu ASSR. 8 apreliia 1944 g.,” in *Posledeniye resheniia pravitel'stva Soiuz SSR*, 500.

argues that the Germans' occupation of the mountain passes was a result of their greater preparation compared with the Red Army. First, the German Army was able to occupy the mountain passes around Mount Elbrus because their assault group included a special detachment of mountain climbers who had travelled to the Elbrus region before the war under the guise of a civilian alpinist expedition. These alpinists brought back detailed maps of the Elbrus region for use by the German Army during a future assault on the Caucasus.⁸⁶ Second, the Red Army initially sent an inadequate number of forces to defend the mountains.⁸⁷

The mountains also offered fugitive deserters from the Red Army and active anti-Soviet resisters alike—the NKVD did not distinguish between the two categories—refuge from Soviet security forces. Therefore, while Kabardians and Balkars resisted Soviet rule or simply deserted (particularly from the beaten volunteers of the 115th Kabardino-Balkar Cavalry) during the War in roughly equal measure, the crags, cliffs and caves of their mountain valleys enabled Balkars to evade capture by the NKVD for much longer than Kabardians.⁸⁸ For this reason, and others to be discussed below, local NKVD reports on the security situation in Kabardino-Balkar emphasized the problems in Balkar regions.

Rising fears of Turkish invasion of the Caucasus and Crimea, initially sparked by an escalation of pan-Turkist rhetoric in the Turkish press and Turkey's 1941 friendship pact with Germany, led the Stalinist regime to view the Turkic peoples of the Soviet

⁸⁶ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 67-68.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 62-63

Union with increased suspicion, especially those residing in southern regions closest to the front and to Turkey like the Balkars.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, the fiercely anti-Soviet leaders of Turkey's large Caucasian émigré community, including Imam Shamil's grandson, began making plans for returning to the Caucasus after a German invasion. Finally, Turkey's concentration of troops on its Soviet border, in the summer of 1942 and the simultaneous German advance in the North Caucasus, magnified Stalin's fears of Turkish invasion and paranoia about the Turkic peoples of the Crimea and the Caucasus acting a Turkish fifth column. Indeed, Turkey awaited an anticipated German victory in Stalingrad to launch an invasion into the Caucasus aimed at reclaiming former Ottoman territories.⁹⁰ According to G. Takoev, former North Ossetian NKVD chief who defected during the war, "the General Staff of the USSR came to the... conclusion that in the case of war in the south, the peoples of the Caucasus could become a problem for the military machine in this sensitive place and, therefore, it would be strategically appropriate to take timely 'special' measures."⁹¹

Balkar historians argue that local dynamics—having much more to do with the wartime shortcomings of the Republic's leadership and fear of punishment than with problems of inter-communal relations—also played a role in the deportation of the Balkars. According this interpretation, Zuber Kumekhov, the young Kabardian leader of Kabardino-Balkaria's Party organization, provided compromising material on the Balkars, such as reports that exaggerated the extent of Balkar resistance and Nazi

⁸⁹ I.A. Giliyazov, "Pantiurkizm, panturanizm i Germaniia," *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* No. 2 (1996): 98.

⁹⁰ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 74-77.

⁹¹ G. Takoev, "K problemam politiki v SSSR," *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* 31 no. 3 (1951), 66.

collaboration, in an effort to deflect the blame for what the Stalinist leadership viewed as his failures during the German assault on and occupation of Kabardino-Balkaria.⁹²

On June 22 1941, when Hitler's invasion brought the Soviet Union into World War Two, the leadership of Kabardino-Balkaria consisted of younger *vydvizhentsy* (promoted workers) who had risen through the ranks of the local Party organization in the 1930s. Kabardino-Balkaria's young leadership proved unable to cope with the tasks of the Party organization during wartime. The NKVD had purged nearly the entire Kabardian and Balkar leadership of the 1920s between 1934 and 1938.⁹³ After overseeing the destruction of rivals, former comrades-in-arms, and the remaining pre-Stalinist intelligentsia, Betal Kalmykov, Secretary of the Kabardino-Balkar Party organization from its inception, also fell victim to the purges as an "enemy of the people" in 1938.⁹⁴ After a brief interlude, during which a Russian sent from Moscow served as First Secretary of the Kabardino-Balkaria Party organization, in 1939 the Party chose a Kabardian, Zuber Kumekhov, then only 29 years old, to fill Kabardino-Balkaria's highest leadership position.⁹⁵

Kumekhov was the exemplar of a Kabardian *vydvizhenets* (a worker who rose up the ranks to a leadership position as a result of his social background). The sixteenth of seventeen children in a poor peasant family, with his mother dying of illness and his father executed by the White Army for actively supporting the Bolsheviks, Kumekhov

⁹² Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 88.

⁹³ For a discussion of the purges in Kabardino-Balkaria see Valerii Khatazhukov ed. *Politicheskie repressii v Kabardino-Balkarii v 1918-1930-kh godakh (Stat'i i dokumenty)* (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskii Respublikanskii Pravooshchitnyi Tsentr, 2010).

⁹⁴ RGASPI 17/21/1249 (1938): 48-50.

⁹⁵ RGASPI 17/21/1250 (1939): 99.

became an orphan at the age of nine. He worked as a shepherd for his aul's communal flocks until the mid-1920s when he joined the first cohort of young Kabardians and Balkars to study and live in Nalchik's Lenin Educational Village.⁹⁶ Highly controversial at the time, this new Communist boarding-school was designed to indoctrinate and train new Soviet cadres from the local nationalities and, importantly, break the hold of national customs over the younger generation of Kabardians and Balkars by removing them from their auls.⁹⁷ Kumekhov continued his education as part of the first class to enter Nalchik's new Pedagogical Technical School. After finishing his higher education in 1932, Kumekhov went on to serve in a series of important administrative posts in Kabardino-Balkaria including: head of the Department of Education for his home district of Urvan; chairman of a Kolkhoz; Party secretary of the Dokshukino Alcohol Factory; and, in late-1937, Party Secretary of the new Lesken District.⁹⁸ In 1939, after less than seven years of Party and state service, Kumekhov found himself in charge of the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR.

It fell upon this relative unknown to steer Kabardino-Balkaria through the difficult years of World War Two. The chief challenges that Kumekhov and the young Kabardino-Balkar leadership confronted during the war included: the mobilization of Kabardino-Balkaria's material resources for the war effort; the organization and

⁹⁶ A.Kh. Abaev, "Z.D. Kumekhov: Pervyi sekretar' Kabardino-Balkarskogo obkoma VKP(b), 1939-1944 (K stoletiiu so dnia rozhdeniia)," *Arkhiy i obshchestvo* no. 15 (2010): 200-10.

⁹⁷ R.Kh. Gugov, "Kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo v Kabardino-Balkarii v pervye gody sotsialisticheskoi rekonstruktsii narodnogo khoziastva SSSR (1926-1929)," *Uchenye Zapiski Kabardino-Balkarskogo Nauchno-issledovatel'skogo Instituta* no. 15 (1959): 109-38. Slezkine discusses similar Soviet cultural policies, which he describes as a "frontal attack...on backwardness," in his research on the small peoples of the North. Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 220-21.

⁹⁸ Abaev, "Z.D. Kumekhov," 204.

equipping of a volunteer cavalry; the defense of Kabardino-Balkaria's capital city; the evacuation of key Party and state personnel, heavy industry, and other valuable material from the Republic in the event of fascist (German-Romanian) occupation; and the coordination of partisan resistance. Initially, Kumekhov and the Kabardino-Balkar leadership coped well with the first of these tasks. Kabardino-Balkaria mobilized great material and human resources for the front. They oversaw the quick retooling of local factories for the production of armaments and military supplies. Kabardino-Balkaria provided substantial grain and meat provisions for the front.⁹⁹ Finally, the initial mobilization of those under military service obligation was a success. After the halt in conscription of indigenous groups from the North Caucasus, the republican leadership, under orders from the State Committee of Defense (GKO), found no shortage of volunteers for a Kabardino-Balkar National Cavalry Division. The 3,500 Kabardian and Balkar volunteers of the 115th Kabardino-Balkar Cavalry fought bravely under incredibly difficult conditions. The Red Army sent the Kabardian and Balkar horsemen of this division to fight against the main contingent of German armored tank detachments on the southern front. After helping to slow the German advance in the Don region, the 115th Kabardino-Balkar Cavalry suffered crippling defeat on the Sal'sk Steppes in August 1942.¹⁰⁰

In mid-August 1942, as German and Romanian armies began to advance on the North Caucasus, conditions in Kabardino-Balkaria deteriorated rapidly and the local

⁹⁹ T.Kh. Kumykov, *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarii* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1997), 303-04.

¹⁰⁰ "Formirovanie 115-i Kabardino-Balkarskoi natsional'noi kavaleriiskoi divizii i ee uchastie v boevykh deistviakh: normativno-pravovye akty i organizatsionnye raboty partiinykh, sovetskikh i komsomol'skikh organov, vospominaniia i stat'i," *Arkhivy i obshchestvo* no. 13 (2010): 58-79.

leadership proved incapable of dealing with the herculean tasks placed upon it. First, most of the 700 surviving volunteers of the 115th Kabardino-Balkar Cavalry, now leaderless and badly beaten, decided to return home, considering their mission fulfilled and not wanting to be broken up and reassigned among different divisions of the Red Army. Fearing punishment, these former cavalymen, decided to wait out the war as fugitives in the mountains of Kabardino-Balkaria; a minority joined armed resistance groups.¹⁰¹ With the appearance of these deserters in the mountains in August, the number of “bandits” in Kabardino-Balkar NKVD reports to Beria increased exponentially because the security organs did not differentiate between deserters and active members of armed groups. This seeming increase in “banditry” reflected poorly upon Kumekhov and the Party leadership. Second, Kumekhov made the decision to evacuate Kabardino-Balkaria’s industry, agricultural equipment, and cattle too late and, consequently, the fascist armies took control of larger numbers of tractors, cattle and horses, and functioning factories.¹⁰² Third, 43 percent of the Republic’s Party members and candidates remained on occupied territory.¹⁰³ The fascist occupation authorities forced Party members, under threat of execution, to relinquish their Party allegiance and serve in the occupation administration. Many party members were among the 3,000 people who fled westward from Kabardino-Balkaria in January 1943 with the fascists in hopes of evading retribution for their collaboration during the occupation.¹⁰⁴ Fourth, the defense of the capital, Nalchik, which the Party placed in the hands of Kumekhov, collapsed in late-

¹⁰¹ Bezugol’nyi, 220.

¹⁰² Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 62-63.

¹⁰³ RGANI 6/6/1611 (1943): 200.

¹⁰⁴ Sabanchiev, *Balkarstsy*, 71.

October 1942. Finally, Kumekhov did not do enough, according to a July 1943 Party Control Commission report and his post-war critics,¹⁰⁵ to organize an effective partisan movement in Kabardino-Balkaria. The GKO ordered Kumekhov to organize 1,000 partisans into several groups and divisions that would target fascist forces in various sectors of occupied Kabardino-Balkaria. Kumekhov managed to assemble only one partisan division consisting of 125 people.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, while Kumekhov successfully organized the evacuation of the families and property of local Party leaders, those of the Partisans remained in Kabardino-Balkaria. As Sabanchiev argues, “such care for the families of officials and simultaneous ignoring of the fates of ordinary Communists and residents negatively impacted the faith of the population in Soviet power.”¹⁰⁷

To be sure, the tasks that the GKO delegated to Kumekhov and the Kabardino-Balkar leadership would have been difficult for even the most capable and tested Party leaders and administrators. Nevertheless, Sabanchiev posits that by exaggerating the size and actions of the anti-Soviet resistance in the mountains during and after the fascist occupation, Kumekhov attempted to deflect blame for these perceived failures and create a perception that his working conditions were worse than they actually were.¹⁰⁸

Even before the deportations, alarmist reports on anti-Soviet resistance from Kumekhov and the local NKVD had tragic consequences for the Balkar population as the Soviet security organs responded to the exaggerated threat with absolute destructive

¹⁰⁵RGANI 6/6/1611 (1943): 202-07.

¹⁰⁶ A.M. Shameev, “Osobennosti i kharakter partizanskogo dvizheniia v Kabardino-Balkarii protiv nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov vo vtoroi polovine 1942-nachale 1943 gg,” *Arkhivy i obshchestvo* no. 12 (2010): 207-11.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 73-74.

force. In responding to reports of Balkar resistance, the Soviet security organs adopted policies of ethnic cleansing similar to those used by colonial empires in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries—policies that would later be adopted by these empires in their military practices in the total World Wars in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁹ Tactics of destroying and relocating rebellious villages were the very ones that tsarist armies in the North Caucasus used a century earlier, and ones that Soviet security forces had been using to root out resistance in Chechnya since the mid-1920s.¹¹⁰

The violence perpetrated by NKVD forces upon peaceful civilians in the Cherek Valley between November 27 and December 4 1942, on the eve of the relatively brief (month-long) German occupation here, exemplifies these absolute destructive practices. During an Obkom meeting in October 1942, Kumekhov claimed that there were “more than 600 armed bandits.”¹¹¹ There were really only about 150 to 200 people of various nationalities—Balkars, Kabardians, Georgians, and Ossetians—whom the NKVD labeled “bandits” hiding out in the Cherek Valley. The majority of these “bandits” (about 100) were deserters evading prosecution.¹¹² After the only major clashes between deserters-cum-insurgents and Soviet forces in the Cherek Valley,¹¹³ which occurred from November 21 through November 23 as the 37th Army retreated deeper into the valley from the German advance into the Balkar districts of the KBASSR, hundreds of NKVD

¹⁰⁹ Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

¹¹⁰ Holquist, “To Count, To Extract and To Exterminate,” 111-13.

¹¹¹ TsDNIKBR P-1/53/4 (1943): 16.

¹¹² K.G. Azamatov et al., *Cherekskaiia tragediia* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1994), 9-10

¹¹³ The only major clashes between the deserters-cum-insurgents and the Red Army and local NKVD occurred in Mukhol on November 21, one week before the NKVD sent its troops into Upper Balkaria on a punitive mission, when insurgents attacked the building of the Cherek District Executive Committee to exact their revenge upon the secretary of District Party Committee, Khamid Eneev, for the murder of an innocent civilian. See *ibid.*, 14-15.

soldiers conducted a brutal punitive expedition in the valley. As a result of the NKVD's execution of civilians in the area, the until-then mostly peaceful deserters resorted to insurgent tactics, including a raid on the District Executive Committee.¹¹⁴ Unable to root out the insurgents, NKVD forces sealed off five villages and began taking hostages in order to pressure the illusive bandits to lay down their arms. Over the course of four days, NKVD forces, fearing that the impending arrival of the Germans would prevent the total elimination of the insurgents, burned down three villages and executed 1,500 women, children, and elderly men.¹¹⁵ There was one small clash involving Balkars insurgents, responding to the murder of their families, which resulted in the death of three insurgents and seven Soviet soldiers.¹¹⁶ Before abandoning the region to the advancing German forces, the NKVD forces piled the corpses of the murdered villagers in a building and burned it down. Captain Fedor Nakin, Commander of the NKVD forces that carried out the mission, summarized the results of his punitive expedition:

During the period from 27.11.42 through 30.11.42 five villages have been destroyed: Upper Balkars, Salty [Sautu], Kumiun, Upper Cheget and Glashevo, of these the first three were burned down. 1500 people were killed, according to the testimony of hostages this included 90 bandits, 400 people (men) capable of carrying arms, and the remainder were women and children.¹¹⁷

As in similar cases of Soviet wartime atrocities, most infamously Katyn,¹¹⁸ the Soviet state covered up NKVD culpability in the Cherek massacre and blamed the German occupation forces. Immediately after the breakup of the USSR a special

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 63.

¹¹⁶ Azamatov et al., 12.

¹¹⁷ "Podpolkovniku t. Shikinu; 20.00, 30.11.42," in Azamatov et al., 155.

¹¹⁸ George Sanford, *Katyn and the Soviet Massacre of 1940: Truth, Justice and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

commission of the Supreme Soviet of the Kabardino-Balkar Republic established the NKVD's responsibility for the Cherek massacre. The facts of the case, including extensive documentary evidence and witness testimony, have been published.¹¹⁹ Today, a monument in the shape of a gravestone stands outside the ruins of the village Sautu which reads: "Pay tribute to the lives of the 470 children, women, and elderly men of this mountain aul Sautu who were brutally executed and then burned by the faithful dogs of the Stalinist genocide—the armies of the NKVD—in November 1942."

NKVD Culpability for the Balkar Deportation and the Role of Kumekhov

The NKVD conceived of, planned, and implemented the ethnic cleansing of the Balkars from Kabardino-Balkaria, about 16 percent of the republic's population, as a part of the Stalinist regime's use of population politics to target ethnicities that it deemed unreliable. The deportation of the Balkars and others during the Second World War was a product of the Stalinist regime's growing xenophobia and paranoia about foreign infiltration and potential fifth columns within non-Russian populations.

According to Sabanchiev's interpretation, during the thirteen months between the end of the Nazi occupation and the Balkar deportations in March 1944, the interests of local NKVD chief Konstantin Bziava and First Secretary Kumekhov aligned; both signed their names to damning reports to Beria, which were likely ordered by Beria, on banditry and treason in the Balkar districts. Kumekhov was able to specifically target the Balkar

¹¹⁹ There are two major works on the Cherek massacre: Azamatov et al. and B.B. Temukuev, *Sem' dnei odnogo veka: 27 noiabria--5 dekabria 1942 goda: v dokumentakh 1943 g* (Nalchik: Poligrafservis i T, 2004).

districts for two reasons. First, the number of fugitive deserters and active insurgents was indeed greater in Balkar districts because the mountainous environment attracted those hiding from or actively resisting Soviet power.¹²⁰ Second, as both Sabanchiev and Borov have argued, the Balkars had few of their own representatives among Kabardino-Balkaria's ruling elite;¹²¹ the Balkar *nomenklatura*, always relatively small given the Balkars' minority share of the population, had either fallen victim to Stalinist repression before the war or were called up to the front during the war. Sources suggest that Bziava, under orders from Beria, was interested in organizing the deportation of the Balkars.¹²² In June 1943 Beria appointed Bziava, a loyal comrade from the Georgian NKVD, as new Kabardino-Balkar NKVD chief. Immediately upon his arrival in Kabardino-Balkaria, Bziava issued a report to Beria falsely criticizing his predecessor for intentionally underestimating the size of the insurgency in the Republic and in the Balkar districts in particular.¹²³ This spike in alarmist rhetoric about the scope of the Balkar resistance coming from a loyal Beria appointee at exactly the time when Beria was preparing the deportation of other nationalities (the Karachai, Ingush, and Chechens) on charges of mass treason indicates a premeditated NKVD plan for the eventual deportation of the Balkars.

¹²⁰ TsDNIKBR P-1/1/494 (1942): 4.

¹²¹ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 72; Aslan Borov, "Deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda kak problema obshchestvenno-politicheskoi zhizni Kabardino-Balkarii," *Istoricheskii vestnik Instituta gumanitarnykh issledovaniĭ pravitel'stva Kabardino-Balkarskoi Respubliki* no. 4 (2006): 295-389, especially, 300.

¹²² Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 411; N.F. Bugai and A.M. Gonov, *Kavkaz: Narody v eshelonakh (20-60-e gody)* (Moscow: Insan, 1998), 162.

¹²³ "Iz doklada narkom vnutrennikh del Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR K.P. Bziavy 'O sostoianii raboty po bor'be s banditizmom na territorii Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR' Narodnomu komissaru vnutrennikh del SSSR tov. Beriia L.P.," in *Po resheniiu pravitel'stva Soiuzna SSR*, 485.

In an accusatory February 23 1944 report to Beria, “On the Condition of the Balkar Districts of the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR,” local NKVD and NKGB chiefs Bziava and Filatov and First Secretary Kumekhov cited the events leading up to the Cherek massacre as evidence of the Balkars’ guilt.¹²⁴ After citing statistics on Balkar “bandit” attacks, Bziava, Filatov, and Kumekhov asserted that “the fascist-German armies were received positively by the majority of the population in Balkaria [e.g. the Cherek-Balkar Valley].”¹²⁵ Given the brutalities committed by NKVD immediately preceding the arrival of the German Army, which of course were omitted from the report, it is unsurprising that the local population would have welcomed the fascist forces as liberators.

This report is of great importance in the chain of events that culminated in the Balkar deportations because it would form the evidentiary basis for the Balkars’ deportation on charges of mass treason. The role of the Kabardian Kumekhov in compiling this report has been the subject of recent disputes between Kabardian and Balkar intellectuals.¹²⁶ Ultimately, there is general agreement among scholars that, for Kumekhov, deportation was the unintended consequence of the reports that he signed his name to. The report provided the justification for Beria to order the deportation, and Beria’s request for approval of the deportation of the Balkars to Stalin made specific references to the content of the report. After describing the topographical conditions and

¹²⁴ “Chlenu Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborny SSSR i Narodnomu Komissaru Vnutrennikh Del Soiuz SSR—General’nomu Komissaru Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnoti Tov. Beriia L.P.: Iz Spravka o sostoianii balkarskikh raionov Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR, 23 fevral’ia 1944 g.,” in *Po resheniiu pravitel’stva Soiuz SSR*, 486-92.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 490.

¹²⁶ For example, Sabanchiev argues that Kumekhov was an active initiator and willing compiler of such reports. See Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno*, 9-11; Borov and Shabaev argue that Kumekhov had no incentive to provide compromising material on the Balkars and that the NKVD forced him to put his name to falsified reports. See Borov, “Deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda,” 302-05 and David Shabaev, *Pravda o vyselenii balkartsev* (Nalchik: “Elbrus”, 1994), 7-12.

natural resources of the Balkar regions, surveying the history of the formation of Kabardino-Balkaria, briefly highlighting some of the positive contributions of the Balkars toward the Soviet war effort, and offering a longer account of Balkar resistance to Soviet rule from 1929 to the present, Bziava, Filatov, and Kumekhov conclude: “Based on the above, we consider it necessary to decide the question of the possible resettlement of the Balkars beyond the borders of the KBASSR.”¹²⁷ This was not the first suggestion of using population politics to solve the exaggerated security problems in the Balkar districts. In April 1943, Zhanakait Zalikhanov, the Balkar head of the Cherek District, suggested to Kumekhov the resettlement of the population of the Cherek Valley to the plains of Kabardino-Balkaria as a means of definitively rooting out the “bandit element” and improving the Balkars’ material conditions.¹²⁸ But this report to Beria, written less than two weeks before the deportation, is the first documented mention of the deportation of the entire Balkar population from the KBASSR.

Balkar historians explain Kumekhov’s role in the deportations by arguing that “the Kabardino-Balkar leadership falsified information in order to mask its inability to effectively fight against the German occupiers.”¹²⁹ Aslan Borov, a Kabardian historian, offers an alternative explanation for Kumekhov’s role. He holds that, despite signing reports concerning “banditry,” First Secretary Kumekhov had little say in the compiling of such reports. Reporting on rooting out deserters and insurgents was the preserve of the

¹²⁷ “Chlenu Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborny,” 492.

¹²⁸ TsDNIKBR P-1/1/640 (1943): 10-11.

¹²⁹ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 70. This is the more moderate Balkar interpretation and is found in Sabanchiev’s foundational works on the Balkar deportations. In addition to *ibid.*, see also Sabanchiev’s *Byli soslany navechno*. Balkar nationalists take a more extreme position, claiming that Kumekhov wanted to deport the Balkars in order to get their land. The lack of Kabardian settlement of Balkar regions belies this assertion.

local security organs (the NKVD and the NKGB) and Kumekhov's involvement was *pro forma*.¹³⁰ According to Borov, "if the initiative for the report to Beria came from within the republic, then it was likely from the NKVD [i.e. Bziava], which...was above the Party leadership and...carefully selected by Beria."¹³¹ Borov dismisses the idea that Kumekhov tried to hide his guilt for wartime shortcomings by inflating the scale of the insurgency. Borov argues that drawing the attention of the Central authorities to security problems in Balkaria would have attracted further negative attention to his republic and only provided additional evidence of his inability to control the situation. Borov poses the rhetorical question: "Why would the leaders of the KBASSR feel the need, more than a year after the liberation of their territory, to attract the negative attention of Beria to the situation in the Republic, for which they were ultimately responsible?"¹³² In memoirs and interviews, Kumekhov unsurprisingly minimized his role in the deportations. He averred that, in his two tense meetings with Beria preceding the deportations,¹³³ he even tried to protect the Balkars but backed down after thinly-veiled threats from Beria on his own life and suggestions that the deportation could easily be extended to Kabardians.¹³⁴ In either case, the deportation of the Balkars was not Kumekhov's goal.

On the basis of discussions with Kumekhov before his death in the early 1990s, David Shabaev claims that the NKVD planned the Balkar deportations and merely ordered Kumekhov to assist the local security organs in their task. According to Shabaev, Bogdan Kobulov, Beria's second-in-command, called Kumekhov in early February 1944,

¹³⁰ Borov, "Deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda," 300-05.

¹³¹ Ibid., 305.

¹³² Ibid., 301.

¹³³ The minutes of these meetings are not available to researchers.

¹³⁴ Shabaev, 7-8; Abaev, "Z.B. Kumekhov," 204-05.

a month before the deportation, informing him that the NKVD was “examining the question of deporting several nationalities from the North Caucasus for banditry.” After telling Kumekhov that NKVD and NKGB chiefs Bziava and Filatov “had been ordered to immediately prepare a broad report on the political-economic situation in Kabardino-Balkaria,” Kobulov instructed Kumekhov “that they were to sign the report as a trio and send it to Beria.” Finally, Kobulov informed Kumekhov that “the report was to include concrete suggestions, the nature of which Filatov and Bziava had already been informed.”¹³⁵ Khanafi Khutuev, a Balkar who worked in the Kabardino-Balkar NKVD during the war and in 1965, after returning from exile, went on to defend his *kandidatskaia* dissertation on the history of the Balkar deportations,¹³⁶ confirms reports that requests for information on the Balkars during the month before the deportations were coming in from Beria. Khutuev recalled to the Balkar writer Vladimir Luk’iaev:

In February of ’44, Beria came to Ordzhonikidze [Vladikavkaz] and lived there in his armored train car. And it was from there that requests started to come in for information on the villages in which Balkars reside, how many residents lived in each village, whether the roads were suitable for cargo trucks to reach the Balkar auls, etc. I began to suspect that some kind of cruel plan was being concocted against our people.¹³⁷

Finally, Borov’s analysis of the report and Beria’s subsequent telegram—in which he explains to Stalin the he had received the report on the Balkars’ behavior and asks him whether he should organize their deportation—indicates that the report was indeed

¹³⁵ Shabaev, 6.

¹³⁶ This was one of a very small number of works written by a Soviet historian on the history of any of the ethnic deportations during the Soviet period. Khanafi Khutuev, *Balkarskii narod v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny i poslevoennyi period. Vosstanovlenie avtonomii balkarskogo naroda* (Dissertation for the degree “Candidate of historical sciences,” Rostov-on-Don, Rostov State University, 1965).

¹³⁷ Vladimir Luk’iaev, “A vy vernetes’, ver’te mne... Ocherk-vospominanie,” in *Tak eto bylo: natsional’nye repressii v SSSR 1919-1952 gody, tom. III* ed. Svetlana Alieva (Moscow: Rossiiskii mezhdunarodnyi fond kul’tury, 1993), 29.

ordered from higher authorities. Most apparently, the phrasing of the report's concluding sentence, "we consider it necessary to determine the question of the possibility of resettling the Balkars," indicates that the question of deportation had already been raised. Borov also argues that the wording of Beria's telegram indicates that Stalin was already familiar with the proposed deportation. Borov points to the fact that, in his telegram, Beria does not feel the need to explain that he had received "material on the behavior of the Balkars" or how or why he had received this information. Rather, Beria "accents the fact that he had 'acquainted himself with the material.'"¹³⁸

On March 1, 1944, Beria sent 21,000 NKVD soldiers to the Kabardino-Balkar capital Nalchik. One week later, these forces conducted the deportation of the republic's entire Balkar population. These soldiers were experienced. They had helped carry out the deportations of other nationalities during the preceding six months. On March 2 Beria visited Kabardino-Balkaria to examine the republic's post-war industrial recovery and oversee final preparations for the deportations. He left the command of the Balkar operation in the hands of Major General Ivan Piiashev. On March 5 Piiashev sent his troops to positions in the republic's mountainous Balkar Districts. These troops sealed off the passes between the valleys. The unsuspecting Balkar villagers greeted the soldiers hospitably. The soldiers informed local residents that they had come for rest and relaxation before returning to the front. On March 7, the day before the deportation, Bziava, Filatov, Kumekhov, and Piiashev informed the heads of the Balkar districts of the impending deportation and ordered them to hand over their dossiers and other official

¹³⁸ Borov, "Deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda," 304.

Party documents.¹³⁹ Balkar NKVD agents and militia were ordered to hand over their badges and weapons.¹⁴⁰ At two in the morning on March 8 the NKVD forces sealed off the Balkar villages, erected checkpoints and cut off radio and telephone connections. At five in the morning the soldiers stormed into the Balkar homes, informed the residents (mainly women, children, and elderly men) that they were being deported for treason, and gave them between fifteen minutes and a half hour to pack their belongings. All day on March 8, NKVD forces drove Studebakers packed with Balkars down from the valleys to the train station in Nalchik, where they loaded the entire Balkar population not serving at the front onto cattle cars.¹⁴¹ On March 11, Beria reported to Stalin: “the operation involving the deportation of the Balkars from the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR was concluded on March 9. 37,103 Balkars were loaded into echelons and sent to new places of settlement in the Kazakh and Kirgiz SSRs.”¹⁴²

Kabardino-Balkaria witnessed a series of administrative-territorial transformations in the wake of the Balkars’ deportation. These changes were, in part, a reflection of new ethno-demographic realities in the region after the deportations. On April 8, 1944, the Presidium of the USSR’s Supreme Soviet issued a Decree “On the Resettlement of the Balkars Residing in the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR and the Renaming of the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR to the Kabardian ASSR.”¹⁴³ In addition to changing the name of the republic, which was part of a larger Stalinist policy of removing all official

¹³⁹ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 93-97

¹⁴⁰ Luk’iaev, “A vy vernetes’, ver’te mne,” 29.

¹⁴¹ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 103-04.

¹⁴² “Gosudarstvennyi Komitet Oborony tov. Stalinu I.V.,” in *Po resheniiu pravitel’sтва Soiuz SSR*, 495.

¹⁴³ “Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Soiuz SSR o pereselenii balkartsev, prozhivaiushchikh v Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR i o pereimenovanii Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR v Kabardinskuiu ASSR,” 500.

mention of the Balkars (and the other “punished peoples”) as a nationality, this decree transferred territory from the former Kabardino-Balkar ASSR to neighboring republics. The Georgian SSR, the homeland of Beria and Stalin, received portions of the region surrounding Mount Elbrus, including the strategic passes across the Caucasus range that had fallen to the Nazis. This territory became part of the Upper Svaneti District of the Georgian SSR. The Decree transferred most of the Kurp District (eastern Lesser Kabarda), once the home to the German colony of Gnandenburg, to the North Ossetian ASSR. Home to Slavic peasants who settled Lesser Kabarda in the late-tsarist period and the Kumyks of Kizliarskoe, the five villages near the confluence of the Kurp and Terek became part of North Ossetia in order to connect Mozdok, newly transferred to that republic’s jurisdiction, with the rest of the North Ossetian ASSR. Other decrees transformed Kabarda’s internal borders and renamed most of the few Balkar villages that the republic’s authorities elected to repopulate. For example, Kashkatau (renamed Sovetskoe), Khasan’ia (renamed Prigorodnoe), Belaia Rechka, and Ianikoi (renamed Novo-Kamenka) transferred to the jurisdiction of Nalchik District.¹⁴⁴ The Kabardian authorities dissolved the Balkar districts of Khulam-Bezengi and Cherek, replacing them with a new Sovetskoe District, which now included a number of Kabardian villages from neighboring districts. The remaining two Balkar Districts, Chegem and Elbrus, kept their

¹⁴⁴ “Ukaz verkhovnogo soveta KBASSR o perechislenii v Nalchikskii raion iz Khulamo-bezengievskogo raiona selenii Kashkatau, Belaia Rechka i Khasan’ia i iz Chegemskogo raiona selenii Ianikoi i Kamenka; 30 marta, 1944 g.,” in *Administrativno-territorial’nye preobrazovaniia v Kabardino-Balkarii*, 343; “Postanovlenie biuro kabardinskogo obkoma VKP(b) ob utverzhdenii novykh granits raionov i pereimenovanii riada naselennykh punktov; 22 apreliia 1944 g.,” in B.M. Zumakulov et al. eds., *Chas ispytaniia : deportatsiia, rehabilitatsiia i vozrozhdenie balkarskogo naroda: (dokumenty i materialy)* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 2001), 141.

names, but their borders were changed to include Kabardian villages.¹⁴⁵ A dizzying number of other decrees followed in an effort to maintain the population balance among the Republic's districts.¹⁴⁶

The Kabardian Response to the Balkar Deportations

Sadness, confusion and anger characterized the Kabardian popular response to the Balkar deportations, as many Kabardians watched the NKVD forcibly remove their friends, colleagues and even relatives from their homeland.¹⁴⁷ To be sure, there were those who sought to profit from the Balkars' departure by pillaging the depopulated Balkar villages in search of valuables left behind.¹⁴⁸ However, evidence of Kabardian grief at the deportations and Kabardians trying to offer assistance to the desperate Balkars is far more plentiful.¹⁴⁹ Most often such help took the form of Kabardians showering the departing Balkars, who did not have enough time to adequately pack, with food and other provisions for the road.¹⁵⁰ In one particularly sad incident, as a guarded train of cattle-cars filled with Balkars waited to depart from the station outside the Kabardian village of

¹⁴⁵ "Opisanie vnov' ustanavlivaemykh granits raionov Kabardinskoi ASSR," in *Administrativno-territorial'nye preobrazovaniia v Kabardino-Balkarii*, 348-53.

¹⁴⁶ See decrees in Section (*Razdel*) IV Chapter Two of *Administrativno-territorial'nye preobrazovaniia v Kabardino-Balkarii*, 344-84.

¹⁴⁷ For a testimony of a survivor who was separated from her Kabardian mother during the deportations, see M.A. Kotliarova and V.N. Kotliarov eds., *Balkariia: Deportatsiia. Svidetel'stvuiut ochevidtsy. Vyp. 1* (Nalchik: Poligrafservis i T, 2004), 13-14.

¹⁴⁸ Lidiia Zhabelova, "Soslannye navechno: Fragmenty rukopisei knigi Lidii Zhabelovoi o zhizni i deiatel'nosti Mukhtara Kudaeva-osnovopolozhnika professional'noi karachaevo-balkarskoi etnokhoreografii," *Elbrusoid* <http://www.elbrusoid.org/articles/weinpast/359202>.

¹⁴⁹ *Balkariia: deportatsiia. svidetel'stvuiut ochevidtsy. vyp. 1*, 9; M.A. Kotliarova and V.N. Kotliarov eds., *Balkariia: deportatsiia. svidetel'stvuiut ochevidtsy. vyp. 2* (Nalchik: Poligrafservis i T, 2004), 7; Shabaev, 270-73.

¹⁵⁰ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 103.

Nartan, hundreds of villagers rushed to the train in order to give provisions to the Balkars. Siuttun Atakuev, a Balkar deportee recalls:

Balkar families arrived one after another. They were mostly the elderly and women with their children. The residents of Nartan tried to give them some extra provisions, but the soldiers pushed them back, hitting them with rifle butts. The noise was unimaginable. Everyone was screaming, crying, trying to find their relatives in the crowd.¹⁵¹

Local officials responded to the Balkar deportations with dismay and finger-pointing. Local Kabardian and Russian officials could not openly criticize the central Soviet leadership's decision to deport the Balkars. They did, however, view the deportations as a loss, an economic blow to their republic, and an unwelcome disruption of a long-standing symbiotic relationship. In rare moment of candor following the deportations, at an Obkom meeting, People's Commissar of Land for the Kabardian ASSR, Zhankhot Khuzhokov, a Kabardian, declared that "the deportation of the Balkars from the territory of our Republic at such a difficult moment for our motherland is an enormous detriment for our country, for our Party organization, for the regional Party Committee, and for all the people of our Republic."¹⁵²

Local Kabardian officials, taking their lead from the Center, which was quick to understand that the deportations were being received negatively by the local population, found a politically safe way to criticize Kumekhov for allowing the deportations to happen without criticizing Stalin and Beria's population politics. They faulted Kumekhov for not doing enough to tackle the ostensible cause of the deportation—banditry and collaborationism—through political means. This attack on the local leadership helped to

¹⁵¹ *Balkariia: deportatsiia. svidetel'stvuiut ochevidtsy. vyp. 1*, 9.

¹⁵² RGASPI 17/44/391 (1944): 8.

bolster the Stalinist regime's justification of the deportations, while allowing local officials to express their dismay at the deportations. At a meeting of the Plenum of the Kabardian Obkom, organized to facilitate Kumekhov's ouster one month after the deportations, Kabardian and Russian Party members offered criticism of the First Secretary's management of the Republic during the war. The barrage of criticism began with Kruglikov, a political organizer sent to the Kabardian ASSR from the Central Committee (TsK) in Moscow:

the resettlement of the Balkars...an act of great political importance...speaks to a great deal and, first and foremost, to the level of past [political] work...In connection with these events it is necessary to significantly heighten and strengthen the quality of political work both among the...population; it is necessary to correctly explain this event.¹⁵³

Kumekhov confessed to his shortcomings: "it must be said that the political work that the Obkom conducted was not sufficient to bring about the necessary law and order in the mountain districts." Criticism of the local Party leadership's role in the Balkar deportations continued over the next three years. At the Twelfth Oblast Party Conference in December 1946, Party Secretary Kazmakhov noted:

The deportation of the Balkars was not the result of...the Germans' arrival here and groups of Balkars bandits...It became possible because ideological work in our republic—work on nurturing a spirit of Leninist-Stalinist friendship of peoples—did not meet the demands of the critical moment for our country.¹⁵⁴

The deportation of the Balkars negatively impacted the republic's economy. A steep decline in sheep and cattle stock, which had only just began to recover after the wartime destruction, accompanied the deportation of the Balkars and the Kabardian

¹⁵³ "Iz protokola no 13 zasedaniia Plenuma Kabardinskogo obkoma," 502.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 73.

ASSR was never able to fully compensate for this economic loss. Official plans from Moscow called for the re-population and economic exploitation of former Balkar lands. The government of the Kabardian ASSR decided against resettling the Balkars' mountain villages because of "the absence of necessary conditions (lack of arable land and the high-mountain location) for normal economic development."¹⁵⁵ Local Kabardian and Russian populations had no desire to become mountaineers (in the literal sense) and take the Balkars' place in the Republic's cattle-breeding economy. After the deportations the local government repopulated only four of the 33 former Balkar kolkhozes. Kabardians from neighboring villages moved to the Balkar villages of Gundelen, Kashkhatau, and Gerpegezh, and Belaia Rechka, outside Nalchik, became a kolkhoz for invalids of the war. The Kabardian government repopulated these villages because they were located in more desirable locations. These were mainly villages in the foothills that the Balkars established in the late-tsarist era after the land reforms. The land in these villages was better than in the mountains and they were close to and better connected with the population's population centers. The Georgian SSR resettled several dozen Svan-Georgian families (an even smaller number than the Kabardians who moved to the Balkar villages in the foothills) onto the former Balkar villages Elbrus and Upper Baksan near Mount Elbrus, territory transferred to the Georgian SSR. Finally, the Kabardian government sanctioned the use allotments from the foothills Balkar villages, Khasan'ia and Lower Chegem, as ancillary garden plots for employees of state enterprises. On the eve of the Balkars' return in 1957, only 7.5 percent of former Balkar farmland and

¹⁵⁵“Iz protokola no. 241 zasedaniia biuro Kabardinskogo obkoma VKP(b) g. Nalchik, 15 Apreliia 1944 g.,” in *Po resheniiu pravitel'stva Soiuza SSR*, 506-07.

pasturage was in use.¹⁵⁶ In contrast to the other deported peoples of the Caucasus, especially the Chechens and Ingush, the vast majority of former Balkar villages lay empty, and in shambles, waiting to be rebuilt by their former residents.

One reason why few Kabardians volunteered to resettle to neighboring Balkar villages, despite monetary incentives from the government to do so, was that the local Kabardian population did not believe that the Balkar deportations were permanent.¹⁵⁷ Many expected that the Balkars would eventually return to their homes and villages. Indeed, there are reports of Kabardians maintaining the homes of their Balkar friends. In a recent essay competition for school children in Kabardino-Balkaria on the theme “how events in the twentieth century are reflected in people’s fates,” a young Kabardian girl from Zaiukovo reported on a story told to her by her grandmother about how she experienced the deportation of her Balkar friends as a young girl. After the deportations, this then-young Kabardian girl would visit the neighboring Balkar village of Këndelen (Gundelen) every spring for thirteen years to repaint her best friend’s home in anticipation of her and her family’s return. In her essay, the schoolgirl explains further, “my grandmother did not know then that she was preserving this empty house not only for her friend. She was also looking after the future family nest of her youngest daughter, because when [this Balkar family] returned, my aunt married the son of my grandmother’s friend.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Borov, “Deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda,” 310-13.

¹⁵⁷ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 117.

¹⁵⁸ Zhabelova.

The Kabardian ASSR and Balkars in Exile: Two Extremes of Soviet Nationalities Policy

The divergent fates of the Kabardians and Balkars during the period of the Balkar exile from 1944 to 1957 reflect the contradictions of Soviet nationalities policy. On the one hand, the Stalin era marked the height of Soviet repression of some national minorities. The brutal deportations of entire ethnicities led to their temporary disappearance from Soviet society and, after the return of these ethnicities, the deportees' traumatic experience of exile would remain etched in their consciousness for decades to come.¹⁵⁹ On the other hand, the Stalin era marked the height of Soviet developmentalist policies aimed at forging "socialist nations" out of the Soviet Union's manifold ethnicities and moving them along a Marxist-Leninist timeline of historical development by means of affirmative-action style policies.¹⁶⁰ Nativization—the use of titular languages in administration and education in national republics and regions; the creation of national intelligentsias; and the promotion of members of titular indigenous nationalities to positions at all levels in industry, administration, and the Party—though always present in the Soviet Union, would never again receive the high priority and attention from central authorities that it received during the Stalin years.¹⁶¹ In particular, after the retreat from nativization and the rehabilitation of the Russian language and culture of the late-1930s

¹⁵⁹ I.I. Maremsheva claims that the Karachai and Balkars (and the other deported peoples) experienced a "social death" (*sotsial'naia smert'*) as a result of the deportations. See *Balkariia i Karachai v etnokul'turnom prostranstve Kavkaza* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 2003), 79.

¹⁶⁰ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 8-9.

¹⁶¹ That is not to say that individual union republics did not conduct their own nativization campaigns in the later Soviet period, but these were more products of the center's lack of interference in the internal cultural affairs of some of the republics rather than increased attention from Moscow. See, for example, Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, 108-10, 117-19.

and World War II, Stalin placed renewed emphasis on nativization in the late-Stalin years from 1948-1953. The experience of the Kabardian ASSR from 1948 to 1953 exemplifies this late-1940s shift in Soviet nationalities policy. During this period the Kabardian ASSR witnessed the maturation of its national intelligentsia, an accelerated promotion of titular nationals (in industry, education, culture, medicine, and the Party and state administration), and the expansion of the use of titular languages in administration. Therefore, while Kabardians experienced the full effect of Soviet developmentalism through nativization, the Balkars, deprived of their right to exist as an official nationality, experienced socio-economic and cultural discrimination and decline as a result of Soviet policies.

It was during the late-Stalin years that nativization bore its greatest fruit. In his seminal article on how Soviet policies consistently fostered the development of ethno-national identities, Yuri Slezkine remarks that after the “Great Retreat” and the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet regime “called for an even more extensive cultivation of [nationalities]” and held that “support of nationalism in general...was a sacred principle of Marxism-Leninism.”¹⁶² Despite this suggestion that the late-Stalin years were important to the state-sponsored development of Soviet nations, late-Stalinist Soviet nationalities policy remains understudied and most major works on Soviet nationalities policy underestimate the importance of the post-war era. Many of the major works on the subject indicate, often implicitly, that the late-1930s retreat from prioritizing nativization and ethnic conceptions of nationhood to a statist emphasis on Soviet uniformity through

¹⁶² Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment,” 414.

Russian language and culture continued through the entire Stalin era.¹⁶³ For example, Suny suggests that debates over nationalities policy ended in the late-1930s with the triumph of a policy of moderate nativization mixed with creeping Russification, and that the future development of national intelligentsias stemmed from the continuing effects, almost by inertia, of policies established in the 1930s. Suny writes that “despite the brutal reversals of in the nativization policies...and the promotion of Russian language and culture under Stalin, the processes set in motion by *korenizatsiia* continued until, by the 1960s, most of the republics had become more national in character.”¹⁶⁴ This assessment of Stalin-era nationalities policy neglects the ways in which policy continued to shift between a prioritization of nativization and the pursuit Russificatory statist goals in the post-war years and how the real intensification of these latter policies occurred after Stalin. As Peter Blitstein points out, “for all the talk of a Stalinist policy of Russification that permeates the literature, the phenomenon more properly belongs to the post-Stalin period.”¹⁶⁵ In his seminal study of Soviet nationalities policies, Terry Martin indeed recognizes that the Stalinist USSR would continue to experience shifts between active implementation and relative neglect of nativization: “during the rest of the Stalin years...enforcement of *korenizatsiia* would be sporadic, with periods of neglect followed by campaign-like flurries of action.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ See for example, Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 31-42, 138, 150-51; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 376-79; Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, 108-09;

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Blitstein, “Stalin’s Nations,” 179.

¹⁶⁶ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 373.

The case of nationalities policy in the Kabardian ASSR accords with Blitstein's view that, from the late 1930s on, the Stalinist state pursued two contradictory policies—nativization and Russification—because Soviet ideology held contradictory views on the role of ethno-national difference in “overcoming backwardness.” On the one hand, from the standpoint of Marxist-Leninist ideas about historical development, the perceived “backwardness” of non-Russians relative to Russians “meant emphasizing the fact that they were different from Russians,” that they constituted distinct socialist nations. On the other hand, “from the standpoint of statist uniformity, this fact of ethnic difference was a form of backwardness that was necessary to overcome” through a common Soviet culture based on the Russian language and culture.¹⁶⁷ At different moments, the Stalinist regime emphasized one or the other approach to “overcoming backwardness.” In the immediate post-war years Stalinist nationalities policy shifted toward a renewed emphasis on nativization.

Officials in the Kabardian ASSR began to pay greater attention to questions of nativization after May 1948, in the wake of Central Committee criticisms of the Republic's handling of Soviet nationalities policy. While the post-war years witnessed a general reemphasizing of nativization, particularly the training of national cadres, as Blitstein demonstrates, the 1948 critique of the Kabardian ASSR set off a larger campaign to investigate shortcomings in conducting nationalities policy around the Soviet Union. However, a robust campaign to ensure the immediate correction of these shortcomings foundered as a result of changes in Central Committee leadership in late

¹⁶⁷ Blitstein, “Stalin's Nations,” 11.

1948.¹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, by the last years of Stalin's reign, nativization efforts in the Kabardian ASSR would meet with success in achieving its goals.

In January 1948, the TsK sent Dmitrii Protopopov to the Kabardian ASSR to inspect conditions in the Republic as part of a usual all-union inspection campaign. Protopopov sent back a scathing report on "shortcomings" in the spheres of agriculture, education, and "the implementation of nationalities policy." He placed the blame for these problems on the Republic's Party chief Nikolai Mazin, a Russian appointed after the ouster of Kumekhov in 1944. Protopopov directed his harshest invective at Mazin's handling of nativization. Protopopov reported that in the Republic's poorly-performing native schools the Kabardian language was the language of instruction only through the fourth grade and that Kabardians, and the Kabardian language, had little representation in the economy and administration in the Republic. Protopopov's report also criticized Mazin's antagonistic attitude toward the Kabardian population. In particular, Protopopov characterized Mazin's public comments about supposed widespread Kabardian disloyalty during the war as a "serious mistake."¹⁶⁹ In May 1948, the TsK sent another inspector to the Kabardian ASSR, Mikhail Fonin, to verify Protopopov's reports and confront the local Party leadership on its shortcomings. Speaking at a plenary session of the Kabardian Obkom on May 12, Fonin attacked Mazin for incorrectly implementing Soviet nationalities policy. Fonin criticized Mazin, for "not doing enough to create a native intelligentsia."¹⁷⁰ Fonin read out an April 7 TsK decree "On the Work of the Obkom of

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 246-47.

¹⁶⁹ RGASPI 17/118/25: 19.

¹⁷⁰ TsDNI KBR P-1/1/1816: 369-70.

the Kabardian ASSR” censuring Mazin for his inactivity in the development of a Kabardian intelligentsia. According to the decree, “despite the fact that fifty percent of the Kabardian Republic’s population is of the native nationality [Kabardians composed about 55 percent of the population], the Republic’s native intelligentsia can be counted on one’s hands...and the number of national cadres is not increasing in the...Republic.”¹⁷¹ Fonin described the disproportionate share of Kabardians among the Republic’s intelligentsia:

There are only seven Kabardian teachers with higher education. For every fifteen teachers with higher education there is one Kabardian. For every 50 doctors only one is Kabardian...very few Kabardians work in republican, oblast, and district organizations. There are very few officials of the local native nationality in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Obkoms of the Party and Komsomol. Moreover in a number of the Republic’s districts there are no Kabardians in Party and Soviet organs whatsoever.¹⁷²

The problems of a small or non-existent national intelligentsia that Fonin highlights were not unique to the Kabardian ASSR.¹⁷³

The problems for which the TsK criticized the Kabardian ASSR leadership illustrate the ways in which the results of the nativization campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in the “Soviet East,” fell short of their desired goals. These shortcomings were the results of factors common to many republics. First, despite impressive increases in literacy and primary schooling, there was never enough funding to meet the demands for secondary and higher schooling necessary for the creation of a sizable native intelligentsia. The use of native-language instruction in primary schools

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Blitstein, “Stalin’s Nations,” 226-34.

and increasing fees and entrance standards for higher education,¹⁷⁴ where education was conducted exclusively in Russian, impeded the transition of nationals to higher schooling.¹⁷⁵ Second, the shift from Latin to Cyrillic scripts (applied to Kabardian and Balkar in 1936) meant losing the already inadequate supply of native-language textbooks and other literature and re-training those with literacy in Latin script.¹⁷⁶ Third, the small number of nationals who did receive higher schooling often did not work in their specialization. Rather, as Martin points out, they “were diverted into more visible leadership positions.”¹⁷⁷ On the other hand, in order to meet the rapid-nativization quotas for the hiring of titular nationals, Party and state organs employed large numbers of titular nationals in menial jobs. This type of “mechanical nativization” created a “hole in the middle,” whereby titulars were relatively well represented at the top and bottom of the employment hierarchy but not in the technical jobs in the middle.¹⁷⁸ Fourth, the purges of the 1930s, especially the targeting of “bourgeois nationalists” after September 1937,¹⁷⁹ decimated minority national intelligentsias, including Kabardino-Balkaria’s. Finally, World War II dealt a blow to pre-war nationalities policy successes:¹⁸⁰ many educational institutions of all levels were repurposed for the war effort; much of the Republic’s native-language literature and many of its schools were destroyed during the

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 195-97.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 203.

¹⁷⁶ On the reversal of Latinization and its problems, see Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 414-24. For greater detail on the debates around script, see Michael G. Smith, *Language and Power in the Creation of the USSR, 1917-1953* (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998). For a case study of the Latinization campaign and Soviet language policies generally, see, Victoria Clement, “Rewriting the “Nation”: Turkmen Literacy, Language, and Power, 1904-2004” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2005).

¹⁷⁷ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 385.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 140.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 378.

¹⁸⁰ For a general discussion of this see Blitstein, “Stalin’s Nations,” 198-99.

war; war-time production priorities precluded printing new textbooks and construction of new schools; mobilizations and Nazi occupation interrupted the training of national cadres; and many members of the native intelligentsia perished in the war.¹⁸¹

In the post-war years the Soviet state redoubled its nationalities-policy initiatives and began to make significant progress in forging national intelligentsias, nativizing administration and industry, and expanding schooling in the non-Russian republics.

Unlike the 1930s, when mechanical nativization—simply meeting quotas for native representation in administration—was the order of the day, in the 1940s the Party was now demanding linguistic nativization and the formation of a native intelligentsia. Declaring that the “main task” for the Kabardian Party was “the creation of cadres of the non-Russian intelligentsia and the strengthening of ideological work among non-Russian cadres,” the TsK decree “On the Work of the Obkom of the Kabardian ASSR” called on the Republic’s Obkom to “correct the mistakes and distortions of nationalities policy.”¹⁸² In particular, the Central Committee issued the following tasks to the Kabardian Obkom: the introduction of native-language education through the seventh grade; the introduction of the Kabardian language in local administration; and the expansion the number of Kabardians in political and administrative positions.¹⁸³ After hearing Fonin’s criticisms, the Kabardian Obkom issued decrees reflecting the TsK’s demands. Despite efforts to expiate himself and address the Central Committee’s criticisms on his neglect of Soviet

¹⁸¹ For a general overview of Kabardino-Balkaria during the war see K.M. Dumanov et al. eds., *Kabardino-Balkariia v gody Velikoi otechestvennoi voyny* (Nalchik: KBNTs RAN, 2005). On the loss of Kabardian-language literature and textbooks and the problems of rebuilding the Republic’s cultural and educational infrastructure after the war see GARF A259/5/435: 3-4.

¹⁸² RGASPI 17/122/304: 22.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

nationalities policy, the April 7 TsK Decree “On the Work of the Obkom of the Kabardian ASSR” ruined Mazin’s political career. In 1949 Moscow replaced First Secretary Mazin “for not ensuring the Bolshevik training [*vospitanie*] of the Republic’s Party *aktiv*”¹⁸⁴ with Vasilii Babich, another Russian outsider.¹⁸⁵

In June 1948 the Republic’s Council of Ministers issued a flurry of nativization decrees.¹⁸⁶ The goals of these decrees included: the introduction of Kabardian as the language of instruction for grades 5-7; the transfer of the work of republican, district, village, and kolkhoz administrations into the Kabardian language (with the exception of Russian and other minority districts and villages); and the training and promotion of Kabardians into industry and administrative positions. The Council of Ministers and the Kabardian Obkom put great pressure on the districts to ensure the implementation of these decrees and to report back on their progress.

The Kabardian ASSR government placed greatest urgency on the transfer of administrative work from Russian to Kabardian because, as the Central Committee pointed out, the Constitution of the Kabardian ASSR stipulated that “in order to serve the workers of the Kabardian ASSR in their native language, administrative work in the Kabardian ASSR is conducted in the Kabardian language in districts, villages, and

¹⁸⁴ TsDNI KBR P-1/1/2324: 52.

¹⁸⁵ History has been kinder to Babich than to Mazin; the former is remembered for his positive attitude toward Kabardian culture and his good relations with the local population, while the latter is remembered for his confrontational attitude toward the native Kabardian leadership and his neglect of Soviet nationalities policy. See A.S. Pshibiev, “Mazin,” *Arkhivy i obshchestvo* no. 14 (2010): 85-92.

¹⁸⁶ TsGA KBR 686/1/474: 60-67

settlements with a majority Kabardian population.”¹⁸⁷ The Council of Ministers decree explained the importance of conducting administrative work in the native language:

in the Kabardian ASSR administrative work in village and in republican organizations and departments has until the current time been conducted in the Russian language and this is a violation of Article 24 of the constitution of the Kabardian ASSR and a violation of the most important principle of Leninist-Stalinist nationality policy. The conducting of administrative work in the Russian language has led to some of the directives of the Party and the government being poorly understood by the native population and has impeded the ability of the native population to appeal to Soviet organs in the Kabardian ASSR.¹⁸⁸

Among a host of measures aimed at ensuring nativization, the Council of Ministers tasked the Republic’s district executive committees (*ispolkoms*) with organizing Kabardian literacy study circles for local officials. Local district authorities mandated “100-percent attendance” at these circles and set deadlines for literacy acquisition for all Kabardian officials and recommended that non-Kabardians attend these study circles as well.¹⁸⁹ The Council of Ministers charged the Kabardian National Publishing House with printing official forms, stamps, and letter head in the Kabardian language for all village, district, and republican organs, which were now all obliged to answer complaints and letters from Kabardians exclusively in the Kabardian language. The Council of Ministers requested that Moscow provide the Republic with 100 new Kabardian-script typewriters to meet the demands of nativizing the Republic’s administration. The vast majority of the Kabardian villages of the Republic were ordered to immediately transfer their administrative work from Russian to Kabardian because, according to the Council of Ministers, “a study of the number of officials literate in the Kabardian language

¹⁸⁷ TsDNI KBR P-112/1/45: 22.

¹⁸⁸ TsGA KBR 686/1/474: 60-61.

¹⁸⁹ See, for example, TsGA KBR 575/1/3 (1948): 78 and TsDNI KBR KBR P-112/1/45 (1948): 24, 532; TsDNI KBR P-13/1/61 (1948): 17.

established that in 43 of the 62 Kabardian villages and in most Kabardian kolkhozes, officials are sufficiently literate in the Kabardian language.” Indeed, the decree notes that nativization should not be too difficult because “in a series of village Soviet and kolkhozes...the minutes of meetings are already taken in Kabardian.”¹⁹⁰ The remaining 19 Kabardian villages were given until the end of 1948 to transfer their administrative work into Kabardian.

The minutes of district executive committee (raispolkom) and district Party committee (raikom) meetings reveal that these linguistic-administrative nativization efforts met with several impediments on the ground. Kabardian literacy classes were not being attended regularly and in some cases they had not been formed at all. For example, an August 7 decree from the Mountain District Ispolkom complained that “the organization of classes for the mastery of Kabardian literacy among workers is moving unacceptably slowly.”¹⁹¹ Similarly, the Kuba District Ispolkom reported that “Kabardian literacy classes for senior administrators of village Soviets and kolkhozes have not been organized and managers are not working on Kabardian literacy independently despite the fact many have poor literacy skills or none at all.”¹⁹² Village administrators were also not informing local residents of the official nativization of administrative work. The Chegem District Ispolkom, for example, reported that officials had not informed local residents that they should submit official paperwork in Kabardian.¹⁹³ Finally, village Soviets were often the only local administrative bodies capable of achieving immediate nativization

¹⁹⁰ TsDNI KBR P-13/1/61 (1948): 17.

¹⁹¹ TsGA KBR 199/2/18 (1948): 45-46.

¹⁹² TsDNI KBR P-9/1/57 (1948): 234.

¹⁹³ TsGA KBR 574/1/152 (1948): 23.

because Kabardians, and hence those literate in Kabardian, were underrepresented in more specialized or technical local administrative organs, particularly the courts, the prosecutor's office, district ispolkoms and their sub-departments.¹⁹⁴

District governments ostensibly responded to these impediments to linguistic-administrative nativization with great vigor and persistence. Raikoms and ispolkoms stepped up pressure on local administrators to attend Kabardian literacy courses, inform local Kabardian residents of the switch to Kabardian language as the language of administration, and publish local-level newspapers in Kabardian. Raiispolkoms and raikoms also set quotas for the training and promotion of literate Kabardians into senior positions in local administration and established commissions to oversee the implementation of nativization.¹⁹⁵

The Republic's leadership, following orders from the Central Committee, also put pressure on the Russian-dominated central bureaucracy and upper-leadership of the Kabardian ASSR's to nativize. Shortly before his ouster, party chief Mazin mandated that all republic-level organs "issue replies in Kabardian to all complaints and declarations that are submitted in Kabardian." In order to implement this type of linguistic-administrative nativization at the republican level, Mazin decreed that "in the apparatus of every republican organ...there should be workers who are literate in Kabardian. Mastery of Kabardian literacy for senior and ordinary Kabardian officials who work in

¹⁹⁴ See, for example, TsDNI KBR P-9/1/57 (1948): 234-35; TsDNI KBR P-112/1/45 (1948): 52; TsDNI KBR P-4/1/120 (1948): 17-18; TsDNI KBR P-109/1/83 (1949): 32.

¹⁹⁵ TsGA KBR 574/1/152 (1948): 22-24; TsGA KBR 585/1/36 (1948): 74; TsGA KBR 199/2/18 (1948): 27-28; TsGA KBR 575/1/3 (1948): 78; TsDNI KBR P-9/1/57 (1948): 234-35; TsDNI KBR P-112/1/45 (1948): 22-24, 52; TsDNI KBR P-13/1/61 (1948): 17; TsDNI KBR P-4/1/120 (1948): 17-18; TsDNI KBR P-78/1/81 (1948): 1-2,6.

the state apparatus should be required...Moreover, it is extremely necessary that senior officials with no Kabardian fluency [i.e. Russians and other non-Kabardians] also study Kabardian literacy.”¹⁹⁶ With only 36 percent of the leadership positions in Kabardian ASSR occupied by Kabardians, the Republic’s leadership also called for the promotion of Kabardians in order to achieve the nativization of the republican administration. The difficulty in promoting Kabardians to leadership positions, as Mazin indicated in a Party meeting, was that “a reserve of [Kabardian] cadres for promotion had not been created.” The Republic’s leadership correctly linked the solution of the cadre problem with efforts to improve and expand secondary and higher education for the Kabardian population.¹⁹⁷

The leadership of the Kabardian ASSR also took significant efforts to ensure the introduction of Kabardian language for secondary grades five through seven. According to a May 28 report from Kabardian Party chief Mazin, an additional 235 Kabardian teachers would be needed to meet the demands for the expansion of Kabardian-language schools. This amounted to an approximately 150-percent increase. Eighteen textbooks would also have to be translated into Kabardian and published. Mazin called for the shift to Kabardian-language instruction from the fifth grade to begin about 15 months later in the 1950-51 school year. The government allocated funding for the expansion of the local Pedagogical Institute, increased Kabardian-language publishing, and ordered a census of all trained Kabardian teachers working outside of their field for possible reassignment back into education.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ TsDNI KBR P-2/1/167 (1948): 9.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 3

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 8

Given the TsK's specific criticisms of the small size of the native intelligentsia, the leadership of the Kabardian ASSR began to place greater emphasis on the training of "national cadres" who would eventually fill the ranks of an expanded Kabardian intelligentsia. The representation of Kabardians in higher education in the Republic and around the Soviet Union was very low. As Mazin pointed out at a meeting of the Obkom, "there are 559 students in the Kabardian Pedagogical Institute and only 56 are Kabardian."¹⁹⁹ To lay the groundwork for the creation of a Kabardian intelligentsia, the republican government emphasized expanding secondary education through the tenth grade so that more Kabardian students could enter higher education.²⁰⁰

The 1948 nativization campaign in the Kabardian ASSR emphasized bringing native workers into the industrial sector. The industrialization of the Soviet Union's ethnic-minority communities was a major part of the Soviet developmentalist vision and, by the late-1940s, the state had achieved only modest progress in this modernization project among Kabardians and most other non-industrial minorities. In 1948 Kabardians accounted for only 9.7 percent of the Kabardian ASSR's industrial workers. The vast majority of these Kabardian workers were occupied in lower-level menial jobs.²⁰¹ The lack of skilled laborers, low level of technical education among Kabardians, and concentration of industry around the overwhelmingly Russian city of Nalchik contributed to the small number of Kabardians in industry. In the post-war period, just as in the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 2.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. 6-7, and TsDNI KBR P-2/1/177 (1948): 75.

²⁰¹ TsDNI KBR P-2/1/167 (1948): 5

1930s, hostile attitudes of Russian factory directors, foremen and workers towards Kabardian also impeded the growth of a Kabardian industrial working class.²⁰²

The Kabardian Obkom spurred on the nativization of industry in several ways. It set quotas for the number of Kabardians that each industrial enterprise was to hire and train for various positions along the employment hierarchy.²⁰³ The Party mandated that the factory training schools (FZO) attached the Republic's major industrial enterprises achieve at least fifty-percent Kabardian enrollment.²⁰⁴ Some industries sent Kabardian workers on training courses in Moscow and Leningrad.²⁰⁵ The Kabardian Obkom required industrial enterprises to prepare a "reserve" of current Kabardian employees for quick promotion.²⁰⁶ The Republic's meat processing and packing plant and its chocolate factory sent Kabardian workers to study at Moscow's Food Industry Institute.²⁰⁷ In an effort to attract and retain Kabardian workers, industrial enterprises were required to provide Kabardian workers with material incentives including priority access to housing, fuel, and garden allotments.²⁰⁸ Industrial enterprises were required to establish Kabardian literacy circles for managers and technical personnel.²⁰⁹ The Kabardian Obkom required each of the Republic's industrial enterprises to submit regular reports on their efforts toward nativization. The short-term results of this nativization campaign resembled the mechanical nativization of the 1930s: more Kabardians entered industry, but in lower-

²⁰² Ibid., 6.

²⁰³ On early work to increase Kabardian representation in industry see TsDNI KBR P-2/1/177 (1948): 1-75.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 5

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 5, 9, 11.

²⁰⁶ See for example, *ibid.*, 3, 6, 24, 44,

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 49.

²⁰⁸ See for example, *ibid.*, 3, 5, 10, 14, 20 ; and TsGA KBR 686/1/474 (1948): 64.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 33, 40, 44.

level positions, for example, as truck drivers, janitors, and assembly-line workers.²¹⁰ However, in the long-term, over the 1950s, as the Party maintained its pressure on industrial enterprises, Kabardian representation gradually increased at all levels of employment in the industrial sector.²¹¹

While many of the more ambitious nativization plans—getting significant numbers of Russian officials to attend Kabardian language classes and achieving full nativization of administrative work by the beginning of 1949—went unfulfilled, the nativization campaign quickly yielded desired results. During raikom meetings and conferences throughout 1949 and 1950, Party leaders reported gradual progress (in addition to impediments) toward the nativization of administrative work in their districts.²¹² They achieved this progress in part by continuing to pressure officials to attend literacy courses.²¹³ Nevertheless, there were certain skilled positions, accountants and prosecutors for example, that could not be filled by people literate in Kabardian because there were few Kabardians trained in these professions.²¹⁴ The nativization of such positions depended on the success of long-term programs aimed at creating a Kabardian intelligentsia. The Ministry of Education of the Kabardian ASSR fulfilled its duty to transfer secondary education into Kabardian. The fifth-grade class of 1949-50

²¹⁰ The entrance of Kabardians into lower-level positions is reflected in the reports contained in *ibid.* See also, TsDNI KBR P-17/1/65 (1949): 6-7, 14-18. At a meeting of the Party *aktiv* of Terek District, the Secretary of the Raikom, Khunov, specifically criticized the directors of several local enterprises and administrative departments for “the mechanical replaced of cadres with workers of the native nationality without taking into account management and political skills.” See TsDNI KBR P-4/1/140 (1949): 100.

²¹¹ TsDNI KBR P-1/1/2454 (1948-1950): 1-56.

²¹² TsDNI KBR P-728/1/11 (1949): 44, 412-13; TsDNI KBR P-109/1/83 (1949): 32-33; TsDNI KBR P-4/1/140 (1949): 97-110; TsDNI KBR P-17/1/65 (1949): 2-18; TsDNI KBR P-112/1/50 (1949): 12-18, 44-46; TsDNI KBR P-4/1/160 (1950): 36-40; TsDNI KBR P-112/1/65 (1950): 55-56.

²¹³ For examples of successful efforts at getting officials to attend Kabardian literacy classes see TsDNI KBR 1/1/2454 (1948-1950): 32, 36, 38 and TsDNI 112/1/65 (1950): 55.

²¹⁴ See for example, TsDNI KBR P-17/1/65 (1949): 5-6.

became the first secondary-school class to be taught in Kabardian. By the 1950-51 school year Kabardians made up over half of the Republic's tenth-grade students, up from less than one third in 1948.²¹⁵ This expansion in secondary schooling meant that more Kabardians had the requisite training to enter higher education. The 1951 graduating class of the Kabardian Pedagogical Institute included eight times more Kabardians than the graduating class of 1945.²¹⁶ In 1948 just under one tenth of the students at the Kabardian Pedagogical Institute were Kabardian; already by 1951 Kabardians made up over one third of the student body.²¹⁷ By the early 1950s the number of Kabardian teachers with higher education had doubled and, by 1956, there were 304 Kabardian teachers with higher education, a five-fold increase from the 1950 level.²¹⁸ The Kabardian ASSR's industrial sector took on more permanent Kabardian employees in both menial and, by 1950, technical and management positions.²¹⁹ If in 1948 Kabardians made up 9.7 percent of the Republic's industrial workforce, by 1950 they made up 17.2 percent.²²⁰ The local Party apparatus also made progress in nativizing its leadership positions. If on January 1, 1948, Kabardians filled 36 percent of the leadership positions

²¹⁵ TsDNI KBR P-1/1/2324 (1950): 110.

²¹⁶ Kh. Sabanchiev, "Sozdanie sovetskoi intelligentsii v Kabarde," *Sbornik statei po istorii Kabardy* no. 2 (1951): 156

²¹⁷ Borov, "Deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda," 330; TsDNI KBR P-1/1/2324 (1950): 112.

²¹⁸ N.V. Nartokova, *Sotsial'nye aspekty gosudarstvennoi politiki v Kabardino-Balkarii v 40-kh – nachale 60-kh godov XX veka* (Nalchik: "Elbrus", 2001), 119

²¹⁹ For an overview of nativization work in the Republic from March 1948 through March 1950, see TsDNI KBR P-1/1/2454 (1948-1950): 1-56; For a general discussion of the state of nativization in the Republic by the end of 1950, see the minutes of the Twentieth Oblast Party Conference TsDNI KBR P-1/1/2324 (1950): 14-15, 20, 23, 27, 29, 35-36, 48, 51-52, 77-79, 82-85, 94-95, 110, 112, 115-16.

²²⁰ TsDNI KBR P-1/1/2324 (1950): 86.

within the Party apparatus, by December 1, 1950, they were employed 46 percent of these positions.²²¹

Terry Martin has argued by the late-1930s a type of “silent *korenizatsiia*” emerged and would “characterize Soviet policy for the rest of the Stalin years.” As we have seen in the Kabardian case, the deemphasizing of nativization and attacks on “bourgeois nationalists” that accompanied the xenophobia of the late-1930s did not, in fact, “characterize Soviet policy for the rest of the Stalin years.”²²² Moreover, when the Central Committee shifted its focus to nativization again in the late-1940s, discussion of nativization was not confined to Party and state organs. Rather nativization was widely discussed in public, particularly in local newspapers. The Kabardian nativization campaign of the late-1940s and early 1950s was hardly silent. Throughout the late-1940s and early 1950s, the pages of *Kabardian Pravda* are replete with articles exhorting citizens to “strengthen work on the growth of national cadres,” “tirelessly develop national cadres for industry,” “carefully cultivate national cadres for industry,” “overcome the backwardness of Kabardian drama-theater,” “train national cadres for agriculture,” and “improve the training of Kabardian teachers in every possible way.”²²³ *Kabardian Pravda* featured articles explaining the importance of the shift to Kabardian language in local administration, explaining the relative significance of native- and

²²¹ TsDNI KBR P-1/1/2324 (1950): 51

²²² Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 373.

²²³ “Usilit’ rabotu po vyrashchivaniu natsional’nykh kadrov,” *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, February 6, 1949, 1; “Neustanno rastit’ promyshlennye natsional’nye kadry,” *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, January 25, 1952, 1; “Zabotlivo vyrashchivat’ natsional’nye kadry v promyshlennosti,” June 4, 1952, 2; “Preodolet’ otstavanie kabardinskoi dramaturgii,” *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, June 15, 1952, 3; “Gotovit’ natsional’nye kadry sel’skogo khoziaistva,” *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, September 25, 1952, 3; “Vsemerno uluchshat’ podrotovku uchitelei-kabardintsev,” *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, September 10, 1952, 3.

Russian-language instruction, and highlighting the achievements of the young Kabardian national intelligentsia, particularly in the arts and humanities.²²⁴

In the 1950s *Kabardian Pravda* also began to feature an unprecedented number of scholarly articles by young Kabardian academics on Kabarda's national history and culture.²²⁵ These articles reflect an important long-term achievement of the nativization campaign: the creation of a native Kabardian academic establishment. After the April 1948 TsK decree, the Republican government began to allocate greater funds and pay more attention to the Kabardian Scientific Research Institute (KNII),²²⁶ opening new departments, increasing the number of researchers, and emphasizing the need for more Kabardian representation among the Institute's faculty. In the late 1940s and early 1950s the first groups of Kabardians earned their *Kandidatskaia* degrees (roughly the equivalent of PhDs) at the Soviet Academy of Sciences and the USSR's major universities in Moscow, Leningrad, and Tbilisi. These young scholars returned to the Kabardian ASSR

²²⁴ See for example: "Perevod deloproizvodstva na kabardinskii iazyk," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, January 26, 1949, 1; "Prepodavanie russkogo iazyka v podgotovitel'nykh klassakh kabardinskikh shkol," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, February 5, 1952, 3; "Prepodavanie russkogo iazyka v kabardinskoi shcole," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, February 15, 1952, 3. "Za tvorcheskuiu aktivnost' pisatelei Kabardy," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, January 4, 1952, 2; "Natsoinal'nye talanty," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, April 1, 1952, 4; "Za dal'neishee uluchshenie raboty uchrezhdenii iskusstv Kabardy," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, June 29, 1952, 2; "Bol'she vysokoideinykh khudozhestvennykh proizvedenii!," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, March 5, 1949, 1; "Sel'skaia intelligentsia," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, February 15, 1949, 2; "Nasushchnye voprosy razvitiia kabardinskoi literatury," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, January 13, 1955, 3.

²²⁵ See for example: Kh. Berbekov, "Progressivnaia rol' russkogo naroda v istorii kabardinskogo naroda," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, August 12, 1952, 2-3; I. Muzhev, "1905 god v Kabarde," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, April 3, 1955, 3-4; T.Kh. Kumykov, "Progressivnoe zhachenie dobrovol'nogo prisoedineniia Kabardy k Rossii," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, July 13, 1955, 2-3; A. Kasumov, "Proval anglo-teretskikh planov Shamilia v Kabarde," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, July 29, 1955, 2-3; T. Kumykov, "Sovmestnaia bor'ba russkogo i kabardinskogo narodov protiv inozemnykh i vnutrennykh vragov," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, August 30, 1955, 2-3; Kh. Berbekov, "K voprosu ob obrazovanii kabardinskoi narodnosti," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, January 12, 1957, 2; and T. Kumykov, "K voprosu o zaselenii kabardintsami nyneshnei territorii," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, January 26, 1957, 3.

²²⁶ See for example, TsDNI KBR 1/1/2324 (1950): 85-86 and "V nauchno-issledovatel'skom institute," *Kabardinskaia Pravda*, January 1, 1952, 3.

and entered the faculties and departments at the Kabardian Research Institute and the Pedagogical Institute (which would become a University in 1957).²²⁷

The renewed emphasis on nativization after 1948 combined with general post-war socio-economic modernization in the Soviet Union (increased industrialization, urbanization, steady expansion and improvements in schooling) to produce important changes to the structure of Kabardian society. By the late-1950s the size of the Kabardian intelligentsia had increased exponentially. In the ten years from 1948 to 1958 the number of Kabardian doctors, veterinarians, geologists, trained teachers, agronomists, other members of the intelligentsia went from numbering in the tens each to the hundreds. While the size of the Republic's ethnically Russian intelligentsia and industrial workers still dwarfed those of the Kabardians and the Kabardian population remained overwhelming rural (87.9 percent in 1959), the Kabardians had taken a great leap toward Soviet modernization during the late 1940s and 1950s. Importantly, the Kabardian leadership's efforts to develop infrastructure for further modernization and nativization, of which the opening of a state university in Nalchik in 1957 was its crowning achievement, had been established during these years.²²⁸

The Late-Stalinist Balkar Experience: A Nation in Exile

The Balkars' experiences during the thirteen years of their exile from the North Caucasus were diametrically opposed to those of the Kabardians. While the Kabardians

²²⁷ P.A. Kuz'minov, *Epokha preobrazovaniia 50-70-kh godov XIX veka u narodov severnogo Kavkaza v noveishei istoriografii*. (Nalchik: Pechatnyi dvor, 2011), 68-69.

²²⁸ Borov, "Deportatsiia i rehabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda," 330.

experienced a form of Soviet modernization tailored to the conditions of an agrarian national minority region, the Balkars experienced severe demographic, cultural, and socio-economic decline as a result of the catastrophes of deportation and exile. The Balkars, deprived of their national autonomy and its attendant benefits, were absent during these important years of increased nativization and socio-economic modernization. However, as Aslan Borov argues, when the Balkars returned to the North Caucasus in the late-1950s, the “significant development of the Republic’s socio-cultural infrastructure [achieved during the preceding decade]...provided the foundations for the successful reintegration of the Balkar people.”²²⁹

Deportation was a demographic blow to the Balkar people that would take decades to overcome. Given the cramped, unhygienic conditions and dearth of basic provisions like food and clean drinking water during the eighteen-day journey from the North Caucasus to Central Asia, 307 Balkars died en route to their places of resettlement.²³⁰ The Stalinist regime deported the Balkars from the temperate mountains of the Caucasus to the extreme continental steppe zones of Kazakhstan and Kirgizia. The difficulties in adapting to the changes in geographic and climatic conditions led to an initial sharp rise in mortality and decline in birthrate among the Balkars.²³¹ The lack of basic provisions and housing for Balkars and heightened demands for physical labor imposed on them in their places of special settlement (*spetsposelenie*) also contributed to the significant population decline among Balkars during the first four years of their

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno*, 29.

²³¹ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 128-29.

exile.²³² On the eve of their deportation, the total Balkar population stood at 38,300, nine months later, according to Khadzhi-Murat Sabanchiev's estimates, the total Balkar population stood around 33,000. The Balkar population continued to decline until late 1948, when it reached a low of 31,700.²³³ It was only in 1949 that the birthrate of the Balkars, Chechens, and other deported peoples began to exceed the death rate. The Balkar population only reached its pre-deportation levels by the time of the Balkars' return from exile in 1957. By 1959 the Balkar population stood at 42,400, roughly the equivalent of the pre-World-War-II Balkar population.²³⁴

The Stalinist regime deprived the deported nationalities, including the Balkars and other mountaineer peoples, of numerous rights, stunting their socio-economic and cultural development. Officially, according to the Sovnarkom Decree "On the Legal Position of Special Settlers," the only restrictions placed on representatives of the deported peoples were that they did not enjoy freedom of movement and were subject to a curfew.²³⁵ "Special settlers" (*spetsposelentsy*) could not travel more than three kilometers outside of their place of residence without official permission. Given that schooling in the special-settler villages was usually limited to the primary level, travel restrictions meant that opportunities for education beyond the fourth grade were often closed off to Balkar children. Travel restrictions also meant that Balkars usually were unable to find employment in their field of specialization.²³⁶ In addition to these official rights restrictions, the NKVD Commandants who oversaw the administration of the

²³² Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno*, 48-50.

²³³ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 130.

²³⁴ Aslan Borov, "Kabardino-Balkarii v XX veke: istoriia i etnopolitika," *Voprosy istorii* no. 6 (2010): 72.

²³⁵ Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno*, 37.

²³⁶ Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 135-36.

special settlements received the following list of instructions regarding how they were to treat their special-settler residents:

- Do not accept into the Party
- Do not accept into higher education institutions
- Only employ as unskilled laborers
- Do not promote to positions of authority
- Do not assign community-agitation work
- Do not give them any awards or medals
- Do not encourage any initiative
- Do not conscript into the army²³⁷

This list hung on the wall of each Commandant's office visible to all.²³⁸ Finally, with the dissolution of their national autonomy, the Balkars and other deported peoples lost their national-cultural rights. Balkars could no longer receive education in the Balkar language or study their native language in an official capacity. All official publication in the Balkar language ceased. Scholars could not study or write on the history and culture of the Balkars. Balkar national music, dance, theater, and literature could not exist in an official capacity.²³⁹

In addition to the official mechanisms that cut Balkars off from their national culture, the general dislocation and destruction of the deportations produced a cultural rupture among the Balkars. Much of the Balkars' inventory of national handicrafts and heirlooms—from ceramic and metal housewares, to weapons, to national costumes—were lost or destroyed during and after the deportations. The Balkars transmitted their national customs, legends and other forms of folklore orally within families from one generation to the next. The death of many elderly Balkars during and shortly following

²³⁷ Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno*, 55.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid., 136, 166-67.

the deportation and, to a lesser extent, the division of families across different areas of special settlement, lead to a break in the line of transmission of these important components of traditional Balkar culture.²⁴⁰

Shortly after the death of Stalin in 1953, the Soviet leadership began to issue decrees removing some of the most onerous restrictions on the Balkars and other special-settler communities. These decrees raised hopes for many that they would soon be allowed to return to their homelands. These documents played an important role in the improvement of the lives of the special settlers in their places of residence. From 1954 on, as the state eased travel restrictions on the special settlers, the Balkars enjoyed vast improvements in their employment and schooling opportunities. In 1955 the Balkars and the other special-settler populations began to receive passports and youths were drafted into the army.²⁴¹ Encouraged by signals of liberalization coming from Moscow, Balkar representatives, including the celebrated poet and war hero Kaisyn Kuliev, launched a petition campaign to achieve the full restoration of their people's cultural, territorial and political rights. The leadership of the Kabardian ASSR indicated its support to Moscow in favor of the Balkars' petitions to return to the Republic.²⁴² The Balkars' dream of returning to their homeland became a reality with the start of Nikita Khrushchev's Destalinization campaign in 1956.

²⁴⁰ Maremsheva, 79-83.

²⁴¹ Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno*, 74-75.

²⁴² Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 198-99.

Return to the North Caucasus and the Politics of Reintegration

During their difficult thirteen-year exile, the “special settlers” harnessed the idea of eventually returning to their historic homeland and reconstituting their national existence. Indeed, the experience of exile, in particular the sense of difference fostered by their position as minorities and newcomers to the foreign environment of Central Asia, the stigmatizing restrictions on movement and employment, and official segregation from the rest of the population, produced a strong sense of national consciousness among the “punished peoples,” despite their lack of access to native-language education and other forms of national autonomy.²⁴³ Moreover, the mixing of mountaineer populations broke down geographic barriers that had traditionally impeded national consolidation among the peoples of the North Caucasus.

The first waves of Chechens, Ingush, Karachai, and Balkars began to return to the North Caucasus after Khrushchev’s secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956, which, among other Stalin-era crimes, condemned the ethnic deportations of World War Two. It was not instantly clear whether the Soviet government would reestablish the national autonomies that had been dissolved during the War or even give official sanction to the return of the “punished peoples” to their homelands. In the wake of the Twentieth Party Congress, a series of decrees removed restrictions on residence and movement from the deported peoples; however, these decrees explicitly forbade former special settlers from returning to their historic homelands. The peoples of the North Caucasus forced the hand of the Soviet leadership by coupling elite-led, letter-

²⁴³ Greta Lynn Uehling makes this case for the Crimean Tatars in *Beyond Memory*, 25-47.

writing and petition campaigns with the mass return of tens of thousands of families.²⁴⁴ On 24 November, 1956, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union issued a decree “On the Reestablishment of the National Autonomy of the Kalmyk, Karachai, Balkar, Chechen and Ingush Peoples.”²⁴⁵ It stated specifically that the Kabardian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) would be renamed the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR and Moscow directed the government of the KASSR to include Balkar representatives before new elections.²⁴⁶ It took several months before the Soviet government at the center and in the localities issued similar decrees. On 9 January 1957 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR published an Ukaz “On the Transformation of the Kabardian ASSR.”²⁴⁷ The Supreme Soviet of the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR’s adoption of the law “On the Transformation of the Kabardian ASSR into the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR” on 28 March 1957 concluded the juridical process of reestablishing the autonomy of the Balkar people.²⁴⁸ The process looked similar for the reestablishment of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR and the Karachai-Cherkes and Kalmyk Autonomous Oblasts.²⁴⁹

The Soviet government took measures at the central and regional levels to facilitate the return and reintegration of the “punished peoples.” These measures were more effective in reintegrating the Balkars than any of the other deported nationalities.

²⁴⁴ Polian, 181-216.

²⁴⁵ “Postanovlenie prezidiuma TsK KPSS ‘O vosstanovlenii natsional’noi avtonomii kalmytskogo, karachaeviskogo, balkarskogo, chechskogo i ingushskogo narodov’, 24 noiabria 1956 g.,” in Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 362-66.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ “Ukaz prezidiuma Verkhovnogo soveta SSSR ‘O preobrazovanii Kabardinskoi ASSR v Kabardino-Balkarskuiu ASSR’ 9 ianvaria 1957 g.,” in *ibid.*, 366.

²⁴⁸ Borov, “Deportatsiia i rehabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda,” 316-19, Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 76-81.

²⁴⁹ The Kalmyk case will not be discussed here because they are not Caucasian mountaineers.

They were more effective for two reasons: 1) because the Balkars' home valleys had not been subjected to mass colonization; and 2) because the Balkars' had friendly and largely symbiotic relations with their Kabardian neighbors. The Council of Ministers of the RSFSR and the governments of the reestablished autonomous territories issued decrees allocating funds, building materials, seed, cattle, and other supplies to "resettler families" and newly reconstituted collective farms. The local government decreed the reconstruction of essential infrastructure for the reestablished villages, including: roads; telephone lines; schools; hospitals; and veterinary clinics. The state exempted returnees from taxes and agricultural procurement obligations. The Council of Ministers provided long-term credit to returning families: 10,000 rubles per family for house construction; 3,000 for house repairs; and 1,500 for the purchase of cattle.²⁵⁰

In Kabardino-Balkaria and elsewhere, government aid for resettlement of deported peoples was often grossly inadequate, especially during the first years of return. In this regard, the failures of Kabardino-Balkaria are representative of those faced by other regions of return. By far the most endemic problem plaguing reconstruction efforts was the misappropriation of funds.²⁵¹ Despite the heavily censored Soviet press, the regional newspaper, *Kabardino-Balkar Pravda*, reported extensively on problems of misuse and misappropriation of reconstruction funds. For example, an article from 7 January 1958, "Urgent Tasks of Balkar Kolkhozes," reported that "of the 19.5 million rubles allocated for the construction of homes, only 7 million were spent on housing. For example, the kolkhoz "victory" in the village of Tashly-Tala received only 17,000 rubles

²⁵⁰ Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno*, 82-83.

²⁵¹ TsDNI KBR P.1/2/1105 (1959): 141-44.

of the 650,000 rubles it was supposed to receive.”²⁵² Though not mentioned here, but likely clear to readers, much of this funding was embezzled by members of the Soviet *nomenklatura* as it made its way down the highly centralized chain of command.²⁵³

Though not often directly connected to larger problems in the press, the misappropriation of funds severely impeded housing construction. While articles such as “Widen the Scope of Housing Construction in Balkar Kolkhozes” and “Increase the Pace of Construction in Balkar Kolkhozes” (and the many articles praising the success of Balkar reintegration) also mention insufficiencies in housing stock, officials in Nalchik hid the full extent of the state’s inability to meet the housing needs of the returning Balkars.²⁵⁴ Indeed, the lack of housing caused the Kabardino-Balkar government to freeze Balkar resettlement in June 1957 for the rest of the year. An 11 July 1957 memo from the Kabardino-Balkar Council of Ministers to the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR explains that the decision to halt further resettlement was motivated by the fact that “3,964 out of the total of 4,545 Balkar families that had returned during 1956 and 1957 did not have permanent housing...[and] there is a fear that most Balkar families will not have housing by winter.”²⁵⁵

While housing was the most pressing issue, this memo cites other factors impeding reintegration. Most importantly, the failure to purchase the planned amount of cattle meant that the cattle-breeding Balkar returnees could not be employed according to

²⁵² Ch. Uianaev, “Neotlozhnye zadachi balkarskikh kolkhozov,” *Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda*, January 7, 1958, 3.

²⁵³ Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno*, 83.

²⁵⁴ A. Sasikov, “Shire razmakh zhilishchnogo stroitel’sstva v balkarskikh kolkhozakh,” *Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda*, August 21, 1957, 2.; Ch. Uianaev, “Usilit’ tempy stroitel’sstva v balkarskikh kolkhozakh” *Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda*, May 16, 1958, 4.

²⁵⁵ TsDNI KBR 774/2/8 (1957): 44-48.

plan. In addition to lack of housing and unemployment, other problems stemming from inadequate funding and misappropriation, such as insufficient infrastructure (roads, schools, hospitals, bath houses, etc.) and a lack of basic consumer goods, continued to hamper reintegration efforts through 1958.²⁵⁶

Given the inherent corruption, sluggishness, and irresponsiveness to consumer demand of the Soviet planned economy, the problems of funding and supply that plagued Balkar reconstruction efforts should not come as a surprise. Indeed, all returning peoples faced similar sets of problems. These structural, pan-Soviet economic problems merely slowed down the reconstruction process and in no way precluded their success. By 1967, that is within ten years of their return, in terms of socio-economic status, political representation, and culture, the Balkars occupied a position vis-à-vis the other peoples of Kabardino-Balkaria similar to the one they had prior to their deportation. By 1967 the debts incurred by the Balkars during resettlement had been written off, reconstruction—of housing, infrastructure and the Balkar economy—had been achieved, and, most importantly, in terms of standard of living, levels of schooling, and employment, differences between Kabardians and Balkars were negligible.

For better or for worse, Soviet modernization processes gripped Balkar society in the last three decades of Soviet rule. The pre-deportation practices of power sharing—for example, the de facto practice of reserving leading positions within the regional government for Balkars—continued after the Balkars' return. From 1957 on, beginning with the appointment of Chomai Uianaev as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

Soviet of the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR, a Balkar consistently occupied the second most powerful leadership position in the Republic.²⁵⁷ Whatever statistics may tell us, it is also important to balance our assessment with a sense of Balkar subjectivity. The experience of exile, the collective humiliation of being unjustly labeled traitors, and the permanent loss of ancestral homes and property, lives on in the historical memory of the Balkars and continues to shape their sense of national identity fifty-five years after their return.

A comparison of the Balkar experience during their return with those of other “punished peoples” reveals the important roles that long-term patterns of inter-communal relations and late-Stalinist era transformations played in structuring inter-communal relations in the North Caucasus during the post-1957 period. The reintegration of the other deported peoples from the North Caucasus—the Chechens, Ingush, and Karachai—was fraught with difficulties not experienced by the Balkars. These problems stemmed from ethno-demographic transformations, administrative-territorial changes, and the reemergence of historic inter-communal animosities.

Shortly after the deportations, rather than let depopulated lands lay vacant, Soviet officials in Moscow generally tried to boost the economic productivity of the dissolved autonomous regions by settling them with representatives of neighboring ethnicities, Russians, and other Soviet nationalities from farther afield (though the Balkar lands were exceptions to this policy of resettlement). These ethno-demographic changes between 1944 and 1956 meant that the “punished peoples” often returned to ancestral villages and towns now occupied by a settler population reluctant to give up their homes and jobs to

²⁵⁷ Borov, “Deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda,” 326-39.

the returning mountaineer peoples and unenthusiastic about sharing power and resources. These demographic changes created tensions between the returning native communities and more recent settlers, from time to time boiling over into violent conflict (for example, riots and inter-communal violence in Grozny in the summer of 1958), and prevented the returnees' full reintegration in society. Tensions were most acute between the returning native population and settlers in the reconstituted Checheno-Ingush ASSR. In a region infamous for animosity between Cossack settlers and natives, the Soviet state resettled tens of thousands of Russians to Chechnya (renamed Grozny Oblast) in large part to further develop the region's oil industry. These Russians did not leave the region when Chechens began to return and non-natives continued to occupy most top-level managerial and administrative positions in the Republic. Consequently, Chechens and Ingush remained at the bottom of the region's socio-economic hierarchy throughout the remainder of the Soviet period.²⁵⁸

Administrative-territorial transformations after the deportations also served to reawaken historic animosities and create new impediments to reintegration efforts. After the deportations, Stalin transferred the territory of the dissolved autonomous regions to neighboring regions and republics. The Soviet state did not restore any of the three the dissolved North-Caucasus autonomous territories in the exact form as they existed before the deportations. Kabardino-Balkaria did not regain land in the Kurp District that the state transferred to North Ossetia, and the former Balkar-majority districts were not restored in the same form as before. The state did not restore the Karachai Autonomous Oblast.

²⁵⁸ Nicholas Werth, "The 'Chechen Problem': Handling an Awkward Legacy, 1918-1958," *Contemporary European History*, 15, no. 3 (2006): 347-66.

Rather it combined Karachais with the neighboring Cherkes people to form the Karachai-Cherkes Autonomous Oblast for a second time.²⁵⁹ The formation of this new autonomous oblast led to tensions because the Karachais did not return to an administrative unit in which they controlled the allocation of resources and administrative appointments, rather they now had to share power with a multiethnic population of Cherkes, Russians, Nogais, and Abaza. Indeed, a previous attempt at creating a dual-titular Karachai-Cherkes Autonomous Oblast, between 1922 and 1926, failed as a result of tensions between the constituent ethnicities.²⁶⁰ Territorial-administrative transformations were most problematic in Checheno-Ingushetia. In particular, the Ingush part of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR lost a sixth of its territory to North Ossetia, most notably Prigorodnyi District outside Vladikavkaz, and returning Ingush clashed with Ossetian settlers. The Ossetian-Ingush conflict was not new, but administrative-territorial changes reignited long-standing tensions. The Ingush in North Ossetia felt themselves a discriminated minority for the remainder of the Soviet period.²⁶¹ Finally, the Soviet government forbade Chechens from reestablishing many of their former mountain auls, deeming them economically unviable. Rather, the government exacerbated inter-communal tensions by resettling these Chechens to Cossack villages.²⁶²

Part of the explanation for why the reintegration of the Balkars was more successful than that of the Karachai, Ingush, and Chechens can be chalked up to numbers. At approximately 42,000, the Balkars were numerically smaller than the other three

²⁵⁹ Tsutsiev, *Atlas etnopoliticheskoi istorii Kavkaza*, 78-80.

²⁶⁰ Shnirel'man, 415-569.

²⁶¹ Tsutsiev, *Osetino-Ingushskii konflikt*.

²⁶² Nekrich, 146-66.

groups (there were about 80,000 Karachai, 105,000 Ingush, 415,000 Chechens), and their small numbers made return and reintegration a far simpler task.

Long-term patterns of peaceful inter-communal contact and more recent developments in the Kabardian ASSR also help explain why reintegration was more successful here. In contrast to continuing Ossetian-Ingush, Russo-Chechen, and Karachai-Cherkes tensions, after the land redistribution and power-sharing agreements between Kabardians and Balkars that accompanied the formation of the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast in 1922, these two communities lived together in relative peace during the first decades of Soviet rule. As we have seen, relatively peaceful, symbiotic relations had been characteristic of Kabardino-Balkar relations over the *longue-durée*. Reports indicate that most Kabardians and local Russians were enthusiastic about the return of the Balkars. Old friends and relatives ceremoniously met the returning Balkars at the Nalchik train station in 1956, 1957, and 1958.²⁶³ Given the relatively high rate of Kabardian and Balkar intermarriage many Kabardians had familial ties with the returning population. Given the emphasis on “the friendship of peoples” myth in Soviet nationalities policy, it is unsurprising that Soviet propaganda on the return of the deported peoples emphasized inter-communal cooperation and downplayed incidences of conflict. However, in the Kabardino-Balkar case, sources indicate a low rate of conflict and there is little reason to doubt the sincerity of the Balkar, Sh. Mikheev, when he praised Kabardian aid to returning Balkars in his 22 April 1957 *Kabardino-Balkar Pravda* article, “The Friendship of Brotherly Peoples.” After describing the historically peaceful

²⁶³ Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno*, 81.

relations between Kabardians and Balkars, Mikheev writes, “We Balkars see with what joy Kabardians are greeting us and the great concern they show toward us. The Kabardian kolkhozes...are offering great assistance to the newly reformed Balkar agricultural collectives...We Balkars say: ‘thank you Kabardian brothers for the help.’”²⁶⁴ Other articles and official reports demonstrate that neighboring Kabardian villages and kolkhozes donated cattle, seeds, farming implements, construction materials, and, labor to the Balkar reconstruction efforts.²⁶⁵ Indeed, during the reconstruction of Balkar villages, Kabardians welcomed Balkars into their homes and a significant number of Balkar families permanently settled in Kabardian villages.²⁶⁶ Throughout 1957 and 1958, local district administrations organized official “Days of Friendship” (*dni druzhby*) for Kabardian and Balkar kolkhozniki. According to a November 1958 Report from the Kabardino-Balkar Obkom to the TsK, “during these meetings, Kabardian kolkhozes brought gifts of cattle, grain, and agricultural tools to Balkar kolkhozes.”²⁶⁷

Arguably more important to the Balkars’ reintegration than the historic relationship between Kabardians and Balkars, which was admittedly not always tension-free, were the events of 1944-1956 and official policies toward Balkar returnees. Although official plans called for the settlement and economic exploitation of former Balkar lands, as we have seen, after the deportations the local government did not

²⁶⁴ Sh. Mikheev, “Druzhiba bratskikh narodov,” *Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda*, April 22, 1957, 2.

²⁶⁵ See for example, “Balkarskie kolkhozy gotoviatsia k vesennemu sevu,” *Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda*, March 22, 1957, 1; I. Kazmakhov, “Bystree vostanovit’ ekonomiku i kulturu Balkarii,” *Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda*, April 10, 1957, 2-3; “Trudiashchiesia nashei respubliki gostepriimno vstrechaiut balkarskikh pereselentsev,” *Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda*, October 6, 1957, 1; and RGANI 5/32/108 (1958): 139-44.

²⁶⁶ Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno*, 82.

²⁶⁷ RGANI 5/32/108 (1958): 139.

repopulate the vast majority of the Balkar villages and their farmland and pastures awaited their return.²⁶⁸ In contrast to the other deported peoples of the Caucasus, especially the Chechens and Ingush, the vast majority of former Balkar villages lay empty, and in shambles, waiting to be rebuilt by their former residents. Moreover, while some disagreements and tensions arose between returning Balkars and Kabardian resettlers (over rights to land and houses), Kabardians proved relatively amenable to returning to their ancestral villages nearby.²⁶⁹ For example, after the Balkars began to return, the Kabardians that had settled the Balkar village of Gundelen, having received state support to rebuild their homes, returned to their nearby home village of Zaiukovo in a matter of months.²⁷⁰

For all intents and purposes, the Balkars returned to the territorial and political status quo ante. In terms of external borders at least, the Soviet government reestablished the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR in much the same form as it existed before the deportations. The Republic's government made limited changes to the size, number, and ethnic composition of districts (*raiony*), including the Balkars ones. While the Republic's government conducted this redistricting of post-deportation borders for economic reasons, it had the unintended consequence of ending the Balkars' demographic majority in two of out of three of their districts of compact settlement. Relative to the problems

²⁶⁸ Borov, "Deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda," 310-13.

²⁶⁹ *Chas ispytaniia*, 366-78, 413-16, 467.

²⁷⁰ TsGA KBR 774/2/16: 42.

facing the Karachai, Ingush, and Chechens, the issue of districts seems not to have been a major issue at the time.²⁷¹

Finally, during the Balkars' absence the Kabardian ASSR underwent a renewed nativization (*korenizatsiia*) campaign in which the state devoted significant resources to training native Kabardian cadres to fill upper and middle-level positions, previously occupied by Russians, in industrial and agricultural management, local and regional administration, and education. The development of an indigenous higher-education infrastructure accompanied this nativization campaign. The opening of Kabardino-Balkar State University in 1957, the same year as the official start of the Balkar return, capped off this ten-year process. These new institutions and infrastructure allowed the Kabardino-Balkar government to conduct a rapid and effective Balkarization campaign. This campaign included the training of new Balkar cadres, the nativization of the administration and economy of Balkar districts, and the closing of the educational gap between Balkar and the rest of the population of Kabardino-Balkaria.²⁷² By the mid-1960s, the Balkars' reintegration into Kabardino-Balkaria was complete.

Conclusions

There is no basis to claim that the deportation of the Balkars was the product of long-standing tensions between the Kabardian majority and Balkar minority over national rights to land and political representation. After the settlement of the Kabardino-Balkar

²⁷¹ It would, however, become one during national mobilization of the 1990s. See Borov, "Deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda," 342-70.

²⁷² Ibid., 329-32.

land question and the attendant easing of ethno-political tensions between the two neighboring peoples, the focus of state policies in Kabardino-Balkaria moved from issues of inter- and intra-communal competition over land to questions of socio-economic modernization and cultural transformation. Before 1944, local, regional and central authorities applied state policies—whether “soft-line” policies like nativization or “hard-line” policies like NVKD repression of national elites as “bourgeois nationalists”—evenly to both Kabardians and Balkars.²⁷³ Policymakers did not differentiate between Kabardians and Balkars; they were both treated as nationals (*natsionaly*), that is, non-Russians. Finally, the forced collectivization of agriculture and stock-breeding during the first half of the 1930s, which ultimately shifted land control from the people to the state, and the attendant crushing of resistance to these policies, further eroded the potential for mass mobilization around questions of land.

The deportation of the Balkars, Karachai, Chechens, Ingush and other nationalities on baseless charges of collective treason during World War Two was the columniation and most complete expression of the Soviet state’s long-standing practices of population politics and state violence. During the first fifteen years of Soviet rule, Soviet population politics focused on excising representatives of real or perceived social groups—as “class enemies” and “socially alien elements”—from their social environments. With the growth of Soviet xenophobia in the mid-1930s, Soviet officials re-focused their population politics on ethnicities that they deemed disloyal to the state. World War Two and Nazi occupation expanded the scope of the xenophobia and

²⁷³ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 21-22.

paranoia of the Stalinist regime. The war-time collaboration of a minority of the members of the soon-to-be deported nationalities provided the Stalinist regime with an excuse to cleanse borderlands and strategically important regions of national minorities that it viewed as pathologically disloyal, often because of a perceived history of opposition to Russian rule and/or more recent resistance to Soviet policies.²⁷⁴ A confluence of factors, having much to do with geography and perceived geo-political threats—and nothing to do with local, Kabardino-Balkar relations—came together to cause the deportation of the Balkars by the Stalinist regime.

Kabardians reacted to the deportation of the Balkars, which often separated them from close colleagues, friends, and family members, with deep sadness and dismay. The deportation of the Balkars was not only a rupture in inter-communal relations in the central Caucasus, it was an ecological rupture. The deportation meant the collapse of a long-developing symbiotic system based on different communities—Kabardians and Balkars—occupying complimentary ecological niches. Vast swathes of mountain pasturage, which formerly brimmed with sheep and cattle each summer, lay vacant as a result of the Balkar deportations. Consumption of meat and dairy products by the local Kabardian and Russian populations declined during the Balkars' absence. The mountain zones of the Kabardian ASSR lay vacant and the auls formerly belonging to the Balkars became ghost villages.

Many Kabardians looked forward to the return of the Balkars and the restoration of the symbiotic system of socio-economic relations with their neighbors that, though not

²⁷⁴ Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," 824-58.

without major transformation and adaptations, had characterized life in their corner of the North Caucasus for centuries. Indeed, when the Balkars began to return to their homeland in the late 1950s, Kabardians and other local communities were quick to assist the Balkars in their reintegration back into the social and economic life of the Republic. The significant expansion of the Kabardian ASSR's cultural, educational and economic infrastructure during the nativization campaigns of the late-Stalin years combined with the generally welcoming attitude of the local population contributed to the Balkars' relatively quick and smooth reintegration. Indeed, when compared with the return and reintegration of other deported ethnicities, the Balkar case, though certainly not without its problems, stands out as the most successful.

Chapter 6:

Inter-Communal Relations and Ethnic Politics in the Post-Soviet Caucasus: Kabardino-Balkaria and its Neighbors

For five and half years, from the summer of 1991 until late 1996, as the Soviet state collapsed and the Russian Federation gradually re-imposed political order, Kabardino-Balkaria experienced waves of ethno-nationalist mobilization and inter-communal tensions. Just as in the political breakdown of the early twentieth century, Moscow's lack of solid authority in the early 1990s not unexpectedly led to inter-communal tension throughout the North Caucasus. But in the Kabardino-Balkar case, this tension was qualitatively and quantitatively different from tension in other parts of the North Caucasus and other post-Soviet zones of ethnicized conflict. In late November 1996, with the Republic on the brink of violent disintegration along ethno-national lines, the leader of the Balkar national movement, who had recently proclaimed the formation of the Republic of Balkaria and called for the formation of armed self-defense units, came on Kabardino-Balkar State Television and called for the preservation of Kabardino-Balkar unity and offered to dissolve his separatist government.²⁷⁵

Drawing on the patterns and structures of Kabardino-Balkar relations that we have seen develop over the previous five chapters, this concluding chapter analyzes the

²⁷⁵ A.I. Tetuev, *Mezhnatsional'nye otnosheniia na Severnom Kavkaze: evoliutsiia, opyt, tendentsii* (Nalchik: El'-Fa, 2006), 178-79.

medium- and long-term historical factors behind the preservation of inter-communal peace among Kabardians, Balkars and other residents of Kabardino-Balkaria during the period of heightened tensions and ethno-national mobilization in the early 1990s. In particular, this chapter argues that long-standing patterns of inter-communal symbiosis and interdependence between Kabardians and Balkars and the related absence of a disparity in levels of modernization (education and literacy, urbanization, professional and leadership jobs) played primary roles in the peaceful outcome of Kabardino-Balkar ethno-political tensions. In order to demonstrate the effects of these long- and medium-term factors, this chapter compares the Kabardino-Balkar experience with other, less stable situations in the North Caucasus during this period: Karachai-Cherkessia, North Ossetia's Prigorodnyi District, and Chechnya.

The first sections of this chapter describe the events surrounding the ethno-national mobilizations and politics conflicts in the North Caucasus during the 1990s. Next, this chapter examines medium-term factors that influenced the trajectory of inter-communal relations in Kabardino-Balkaria and our three other cases during the early post-Soviet years. These factors are largely associated with the successes and shortcomings of the reintegration and rehabilitation of the "punished peoples" during the last three decades of Soviet rule. The Balkars, Karachai, Chechens, and Ingush did not return to a historical *tabula rasa*; long-term historical patterns and structures of social interaction and inter-communal relations had much to do with the success or failure of the reintegration and rehabilitation of the punished peoples. This chapter will also draw on the forms of political and socio-economic interaction that we have seen develop between

Kabardians and Balkars over the *longue durée* in order to identify the long-term factors that contributed to the peaceful resolution of Kabardino-Balkar tensions in the 1990s.

The final section examines the continuation of Kabardino-Balkar tensions in the non-violent but highly fraught sphere of ethno-cultural politics. I will look at how, after the de-escalation of inter-communal tensions and the coopting of nationalist elites in Kabardino-Balkaria, many of the remaining Kabardian and Balkar oppositional and semi-oppositional figures went from the streets back to the academy to continue their work as national patriots in the cultural sphere. A peaceful (though potentially more dangerous in the long term) outlet for the expression interethnic animosities and nationalism, the existence of this cultural sphere (universities, research institutes, publishing houses, and journals) was a result of the Soviet, late-Stalinist nativization efforts discussed in the previous chapter. In particular, this section will focus on competing interpretations of the history of inter-communal and land relations in the central Caucasus—one of the major topics of the first half of this dissertation. These competing interpretations reveal a desire on the part of Kabardians and Balkars to reclaim their pasts and craft new national narratives of capable of consolidating their nations in the making.



Figure 9: Post-Soviet administrative-political divisions of the Caucasus. *Source:* <http://www.caucasusstudies.org>

Ethno-National Mobilization, Inter-Communal Tensions, and Resolutions

Kabardino-Balkaria

During the waning months of the Soviet Union and the first five years of post-Soviet Russia, nationalist mobilization and tensions between Kabardians and Balkars seemed to be pushing Kabardino-Balkaria to the brink of a violent division along ethno-national lines. These tensions came as a surprise to observers of the region. A 1986 ethno-sociological survey of Kabardino-Balkaria, conducted by renowned ethnographer of the North Caucasus Valerii Gardanov, reported no tensions between the Republic's principal communities. Rather, this early-perestroika-era work focused on the positive ties binding

Kabardians and Balkars to each other. It noted, for example, that one of every five Kabardians and Balkars were connected to the other nationality through familial ties and that 68.4 percent of Kabardians had Balkar friends and 81.9 percent of Balkars had Kabardian friends.²⁷⁶ Despite these friendly relations, Kabardino-Balkaria was poised to become another in a growing list of conflict zones that had emerged on both sides of the Caucasus mountain range since the late-1980s.

The waves of nationalist mobilization that swept through the USSR during perestroika arrived in the North Caucasus relatively late.²⁷⁷ But once nationalist mobilization gripped Kabardians and Balkars, events moved quickly. The rapid growth of Kabardian and Balkar national movements was helped by the fact that decades of living in the Soviet ethno-federal state and experiencing Soviet nationality policies had already fostered national consciousness among Kabardians and Balkars.

From 1989 to 1991 the Kabardian and Balkar national movements moved through Miroslav Hroch's stages of development for national movements in a matter of months.²⁷⁸ In "Phase A" of the development of the Kabardian and Balkar national movements, the Kabardian "Adyge Khasa" (Circassian Council) and the Balkar "Nyg"ysh" (village square or everyday meeting place) and, later, "Tëre (Council) began in 1989 as small associations of "patriots,"²⁷⁹ often scholars, who, through the

²⁷⁶ V. Gardanov ed., *Novoe i traditsionnoe v kul'ture i byte kabardintsev i balkartsev* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1986), 64.

²⁷⁷ On the spread of nationalist mobilization during perestroika see Mark Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²⁷⁸ For these stages of development of national movements see Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

²⁷⁹ Tetuev, 146-52.

liberalization of glasnost', began to exhibit "a passionate concern...for the study of the language, culture, [and] history of the[ir] oppressed nationality."²⁸⁰ The Balkar national movement coalesced around the March 8 1989 commemoration of the forty-fifth anniversary of the deportation of the Balkar people. The Kabardian national movement coalesced around the May 21 commemoration of the 125th anniversary of the end of the Russo-Caucasian Wars—wars that led to the removal, through death and mass exodus, of 90 percent of the Circassian ethnicity, to which the Kabardians belong, from the Caucasus.²⁸¹

These events of cultural celebration and historical commemoration pushed the nascent national movements from Hroch's Phase A to Phase B of mass "patriotic agitation" and "fermentation...of national consciousness."²⁸² During this phase, the Kabardian and Balkar national movements broadened their programs to include the consolidation of national ties with their co-ethnics in other republics of the North Caucasus. For the Kabardians this meant forging a pan-Circassian nation. For the Balkars, this expansion of national consciousness entailed the promotion of a Karachai-Balkar nation. One of the reasons why this mobilization happened so quickly was that key tenets of Soviet nationalities policy—nativization and territorialized nationality—had already fostered ethnic nationality as one of the multiple layers of identity for Soviet citizens.²⁸³ Also, many of the Kabardian and Balkar patriots who would lead their respective movements from Phase A to Phase B had, thanks again to Soviet nationalities

²⁸⁰ Hroch, 22.

²⁸¹ Georgi M. Derluguian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 183.

²⁸² Hroch, 23.

²⁸³ Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment."

policy, long been employed locally in scholarly fields devoted to the study of their people's culture and history.²⁸⁴ The liberalization of glasnost' and perestroika provided them with the opportunity to move from the halls of the local research institute and university to the streets for patriotic agitation.²⁸⁵

By 1991, political developments surrounding perestroika and the Soviet collapse—democratic elections, the local *nomenklatura*'s support of the August “putsch,” and the war in Abkhazia²⁸⁶—broadened popular support for the Kabardian and Balkar national movements, provided the Kabardian and Balkar “patriots” an opportunity to contest the power of their *nomenklaturas*,²⁸⁷ and pushed them from Phase B to Phase C. They became “mass national movements” with political goals.²⁸⁸

Throughout twentieth-century Eurasian history—from the City Duma conflicts in the Western borderlands after 1905, to Georgian-Armenian political deadlock in Tbilisi in particular in 1905 and 1918, to the escalation of violent conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in the late-1980s—movements towards participatory government and empire often collided and democracy failed in culturally and linguistically diverse regions when participatory democracy exacerbated inter-communal tensions.²⁸⁹ Similarly, the Balkar

²⁸⁴ Shnirel'man, 415-569.

²⁸⁵ Derluguian, 206-07.

²⁸⁶ Kabardians have distant ethno-linguistic and close cultural ties with the Abkhaz. When the Abkhaz launched their bid for independence from Georgia many Kabardians, along with other North Caucasus peoples, volunteered to fight on the Abkhaz side.

²⁸⁷ Derluguian, 238-42.

²⁸⁸ Hroch, 23.

²⁸⁹ On the Western borderlands, see Weeks, *Nation and State in Late-Imperial Russia*, 152-71; On ethno-political strife in Tbilisi, see Suny, *Making of the Georgian Nation*, Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883- 1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 176, 187-89, 230-32; Ronald Grigor Suny, “Tiflis: Crucible of Ethnic Politics, 1860-1905,” in *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Michael F. Hamm (Bloomington: Indiana University

national movement's turn from cultural agitation to political mobilization and, eventually, separatism, came as a result of Balkar candidates' inability, because of their people's minority status (they were about ten percent of the Republic's population), to compete in democratic elections to the Russia's Supreme Soviet in 1990.²⁹⁰ Previously, one of Kabardino-Balkaria's three representatives to the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR was reserved for a Balkar.²⁹¹ As a means of achieving their people's representation in the Russian Parliament and avoiding a local political system that, under new "democratic" conditions, they feared would be increasingly run by and for its Kabardian majority, by late-1990 the Balkar national leadership of Tëre issued a number of political demands: "the reestablishment of political and economic parity" among the Republic's ethnic communities; the declaration of a sovereign Balkaria; and the establishment of a federation based on two sovereign ethno-territorial units (Kabarda and Balkaria).²⁹² The national leadership of the Kabardian majority in Adyge Khassa, in opposition to the Balkar national platform, offered a draft declaration on state sovereignty that would retain Kabardino-Balkaria's status as a unitary republic.²⁹³ The counter-elites of the Kabardian national movement and the Soviet-era *nomenklatura* alike viewed the declaration of Balkar ethno-territorial sovereignty as the first step toward the breakup of

Press, 1986), 249-82; idem, "Nationalism and Social Class in the Russian Revolution," 249-58; idem, *Revenge of the Past*, 131-38.

²⁹⁰ S. Akkueva, "Lozung natsional'nogo samoopredelenie i politicheskaiia bor'ba v Kabardino-Balkarii. 1989-1996," in *Pravo narodov na samoopredelenie*, ed. A.G. Osipov (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1997), 15.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Borov, "Deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda," 341.

²⁹³ "Deklaratsiia o gosudarstvennom suverenitete Kabardino-Balkarskoi Sovetskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki," in I.L. Babich ed., *Etnopoliticheskaiia situatsiia v Kabardino-Balkarii. Tom I.* (Moscow: RAN Tsentr po izucheniiu mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii, 1994), 59-64.; "Rezoliutsiia 1-oi konferentsii kabardinskogo naroda po deklaratsii o gosudarstvennom suverenitete KBSSR (6 apreliia 1991 g.)," in I.L. Babich ed., *Etnopoliticheskaiia situatsiia v Kabardino-Balkarii. Tom II.* (Moscow: RAN Tsentr po izucheniiu mezhnatsional'nykh otnoshenii, 1994), 143-45.

Kabardino-Balkaria. And, it seemed clear to all, that a breakup would involve territorial disputes.²⁹⁴

In late 1991, tensions between the Kabardian and Balkar national movements escalated. When the Republic's leadership failed to reach a compromise acceptable to both national movements, on November 17, 1991, the Balkar Tëre convoked the First Congress of the Balkar People to determine the Balkars' political future. After a vote, the Congress declared Balkar sovereignty and decreed the formation of the Republic of Balkaria as a constituent part of the RSFSR.²⁹⁵ The Congress formed the National Council of the Balkar People (NSBN), headed by General Sufian Beppaev, former commander of Soviet armed forces in the South Caucasus, as the "highest organ of power of the Balkar people."²⁹⁶ Beppaev, whom the Russian press depicted as the next Dzhokhar Dudaev (the Soviet general who led Chechnya's independence movement),²⁹⁷ declared a Balkar boycott of the upcoming elections for the first president of Kabardino-Balkaria.²⁹⁸ The NSBN quickly organized a Balkar referendum on the question of Balkar sovereignty and the formation of the Republic of Balkaria. After high voter turnout at the referendum, by the end of 1991, the NSBN reported that 98 percent of the Balkar population voted "yes" when asked: "Do you support the declaration of national sovereignty of the Balkar people and the formation of the Republic of Balkaria as a

²⁹⁴ Borov, "Deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda," 346-47.

²⁹⁵ "Dekaratsiia o provozglashenii Respubliki Balkaria i natsional'nogo suvereniteta balkarskogo naroda," in *Ethnopoliticheskaia situatsiia v Kabardino-Balkarii. Tom II*, 183.

²⁹⁶ "Postanovlenie 'ob obrazovanii natsional'nogo Soveta Balkarskogo Naroda'," in *ibid.*, 184.

²⁹⁷ Yo'av Karny, *Highlanders: A Journey to the Caucasus in Quest of Memory* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 364.

²⁹⁸ Derluguian, 242; Kazenin, 66.

constituent part of the RSFSR?”²⁹⁹ In response, on January 10, 1992, Adyge Khasa countered, calling a Congress of the Kabardian People which resolved “to re-establish the sovereignty of the Kabardian Republic within the borders of the historic territory of the Kabardian people.”³⁰⁰ The long-term plan, voiced by the leaders of the Kabardian and Balkars national movements, was to unite their republics with their co-ethnics in other neighboring republics: to create a Karachai-Balkar Republic and a pan-Circassian Republic that would include the territories of the Kabardians, Cherkes, Adygei, and Shapsugs (a small Circassian community near the Black Sea without autonomous status).³⁰¹

The prospect of creating separate republics for the Kabardian and Balkar peoples based on their “historic territories” posed a potentially explosive problem: as in the past, again in the early 1990s, there was wide disagreement over what these historic borders should look like. On November 19, 1992, Kabardino-Balkaria’s Supreme Soviet recognized the decisions of the Kabardians’ and Balkars’ respective congresses to form separate republics and its presidium formed a commission to assist in the implementation of the legislation necessary to formalize the split.³⁰² In the interim, the organs of state power of Kabardino-Balkaria would continue to exercise sole jurisdiction over the Republic’s territory. In regard to the question of the borders of these planned republics,

²⁹⁹ “Postanovanlenie o provedenii referendum balkarskogo naroda (21 dekabria 1991 g.),” in *Ethnopoliticheskaia situatsiia v Kabardino-Balkarii. Tom II*, 198; Derluguian, 211; Borov, “Deportatsiia i reabilitatsiia balkarskogo naroda,” 360.

³⁰⁰ Tetuev, 176; “Reshenii o vosstanovlenii Kabardinskoi Respubliki,” in *Ethnopoliticheskaia situatsiia v Kabardino-Balkarii. Tom II*, 13-14.

³⁰¹ Shnirel’man, 123-25; Sufian Zhemukhov, “The Birth of Modern Circassian Nationalism,” *Nationalities Papers* 40 no. 4 (2012): 503-24.

³⁰² Tetuev, 176.

the SKN and the NSBN each formed their own “expert groups,” composed of local historians of their respective nationality, to study and report on the historic borders of the Kabardians and Balkars. Each “expert group” reported contradictory findings. The Kabardians reported that, in 1863, the Kodzokov Commission clearly delimited the border between the Kabardian and Balkar lands. In an effort to meet the continuing land needs of the Balkar people, over the course of the late-imperial and early-Soviet periods, the local administration repeatedly allotted land to the Balkars beyond their 1863 borders. The historian Khasan Dumanov, head of the Kabardian expert commission, argued that any territorial delimitation between Kabarda and Balkaria should reflect the 1863 borders.³⁰³ The Balkars argued that Kodzokov’s project was never officially approved and that it did not reflect the historic borders of the two people but rather reflected the “national” sympathies of its Kabardian author.³⁰⁴ Appealing to the more distant past, the Balkar expert group argued that Balkars occupied the territory of Kabardino-Balkaria long before the arrival of Kabardians in the late fifteenth century and that Kabardian colonization pushed the Balkars into the mountains. The Balkar elites wanted the borders of their Republic to include the four Balkar districts as they existed on the eve of the Balkars’ deportation (January 1, 1944) and the three Balkar villages lying outside these districts.³⁰⁵ From 1992 through 1994, Kabardian and Balkar scholars engaged in heated

³⁰³ Khasan Dumanov, “Pravda o granitsakh. Iz etnicheskoi istorii Kabardy i Balkarii XIX- Nach. XX vv.,” *Kabardino-Balkarskaia Pravda*, December 10, 1991, 2-3.

³⁰⁴ Khanafi Khutuev, “Byla li granitsa?,” *Sovetskaia molodezh*, February 22, 1992, 1.

³⁰⁵ “Postanovlenie Natsional’nogo Soveta Balkarskogo Naroda Ob itogakh raboty komissii NSBN po administrativno-territorial’nomu ustroistvu po voprosam opredeleniia etnocheskoi territorii i etnocheskikh granits Balkarii,” in *Ethnopoliticheskaia situatsiia v Kabardino-Balkarii. Tom II*, 243-46.

debates over the history of their people's ethno-territorial relations with each other, often taking to the pages of the Republic's newspapers.³⁰⁶

As national intellectuals debated the historic borders of their peoples, and the lack of consensus and potential for violent ethno-territorial conflict became increasingly clear, the Kabardino-Balkar government took measures to prevent the breakup of the Republic. A stabilized Kabardino-Balkar political establishment, formed from an unofficial coalition of the Soviet-era *nomenklatura* (led by President Valerii Kokov) and co-opted Kabardian counter-elites (i.e. national activists previously in opposition to the *nomenklatura*-led government), began to find ways to co-opt the Balkar national leadership and preserve the unity of Kabardino-Balkaria.³⁰⁷ In this context, co-optation meant offering national activists positions in government. On July 21, 1994, the Parliament of the Kabardino-Balkar Republic resolved that, given that the decree of the former Supreme Soviet of the Kabardino-Balkar SSR (in 1991, Kabardino-Balkaria's legislature, like those of most other autonomies, advanced the Republic's status by promoting it from an ASSR to SSR) contradicted the Constitutions of the Russian Federation and the Kabardino-Balkar Republic, the decrees on the formation of separate Kabardian and Balkar Republics had "lost their force."³⁰⁸ In its next step to sap Balkar separatism of its force, the Kabardino-Balkar government conducted a survey of 91.5 percent of eligible Balkar voters asking whether they were in favor of "preserving a united Kabardino-Balkar Republic." With 95.7 percent coming out in favor of preserving

³⁰⁶ See, for example, *Vymysel i istina*, 293-332.

³⁰⁷ Tetuev, 176-77; Derluguian, 210-11.

³⁰⁸ Tetuev, 176.

the union, the results of the survey were almost as unequivocal, but in the opposite direction, as those of NSBN's Balkar referendum in favor of separation less than three years earlier.³⁰⁹ Part of the combination of factors that contributed to this shift in Balkar public opinion between 1991 and 1994 was a desire to avoid the violence that had befallen near-by Ingushetia, Chechnya, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia as a result of the escalation of inter-communal tensions into ethnicized conflicts in the intervening years. Moreover, given that the results of both polls demonstrated over 90-percent support for opposing questions, the fairness of these polls is highly suspect. On November 18, 1994, the Parliament of the Kabardino-Balkar Republic recognized the results of the survey as the will of the Balkar people.³¹⁰ On the basis of this decree, the Parliament banned those organizations whose activity was directed toward the transformation of the Republic's ethno-territorial structure or had pretensions to state power on the territory of the Republic, namely the First Congress of the Balkar People and the NSBN.³¹¹

For the next two years tensions remained high between the Kabardino-Balkar Republic and the outlawed NSBN. Beppaev, NSBN's leader, ignored the Kabardino-Balkar government's ultimatum to dissolve the separatist Balkar government or register it as a "community organization" disavowing local politics. The intransigence of Beppaev's position regarding the NSBN led to the defection of more moderate Balkar national elites, many of whom were subsequently given positions in government and co-opted into the new Kabardino-Balkar *nomenklatura*. The NSBN lost some legitimacy in the eyes of its

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 177.

³¹⁰ Kazenin, 71-72.

³¹¹ Tetuev, 177.

constituents by arbitrarily replacing these elected representatives with other Balkar elites loyal to Beppaev's separatist goals.³¹²

The Balkar separatist movement and the standoff between the NSBN and the Kabardino-Balkar government reached a climax in late 1996. On November 17, 1996, Beppaev reconvened the Congress of the Balkar People. The Congress confirmed its 1991 decision to create the Republic of Balkaria. The Congress formed a State Council to serve as the government of the Republic of Balkaria and created Balkar self-defense brigades. The Congress declared that only the orders and decrees of the Republic of Balkaria's organs of power were to be recognized on Balkar territory and that Balkars who do not abide by the decisions of these organs of power or who speak on an official capacity for the Balkar people without authorization would be strictly punished. The Kabardino-Balkar government responded by having Georgii Cherkesov, the Kabardino-Balkar Republic's ethnically Balkar Prime Minister (this number-two position in the Republic remains unofficially reserved for Balkars), conduct emergency meetings of the governing councils of the Republic's Balkar villages on November 18 and 19. At the conclusion of each of these meetings, the representatives of the Balkar village councils declared the decisions of the recent Congress of the Balkar People "illegal" and "unconstitutional."³¹³ Meanwhile, the Kabardino-Balkar Parliament decreed the unconstitutionality of the recent decision of the Congress of the Balkar People and the State Prosecutor of the Kabardino-Balkar Republic began legal action against the NSBN. On November 21, Kabardino-Balkaria's Balkar fraction of parliamentarians and

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid., 178-79.

representatives of the Balkar village councils issued a joint resolution supporting the Parliament's decree and stating that "only legally elected organs of power can act in the name of the people of KBR."³¹⁴

With his powerbase sapped and subverted, Beppaev, as the head of the NSBN, stood at the crossroads of open conflict or retreat; he chose the latter. On November 27, 1996, Beppaev appeared on Kabardino-Balkar State Television and gave a repentant address to people of the Republic. Beppaev claimed that "since Kabardino-Balkaria's state organs of power had conducted much work toward the rehabilitation of the Balkar people, the Congress of the NSBN must submit to the decisions of the deputies of the Balkar nationality at all levels and direct its efforts toward the preservation of unity of KBR."³¹⁵ Beppaev agreed to dissolve the Congress of the Balkar People and its executive organs. Shortly after this appeal, President Kokov coopted Beppaev making him head of his Presidential Commission for Human Rights and the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression.³¹⁶

Karachai-Cherkessia, Ingushetia, and Chechnya

The divergent cases of Karachai-Cherkessia, Ingushetia, and Chechnya provide points of comparison with our primary case study that elucidate the larger structures and patterns that affect inter-communal relations and, ultimately, peace and conflict in the North Caucasus. These cases also help demonstrate why the ethno-political situation in

³¹⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*

³¹⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 179.

³¹⁶ Kazenin, 75.

Kabardino-Balkaria remained relatively stable in the 1990s, in particular underscoring the important linkages between social structure and inter-communal conflict. These divergent cases also highlight the importance of long-term patterns of social interaction in understanding these recent conflicts.

The history of Karachai-Cherkessia during the first half of the 1990s closely resembles that of Kabardino-Balkaria. The Republic's titular ethnicities—the Karachai and Cherkes—clashed over questions of political representation and simultaneously experienced national revivals and nationalist mobilization. Just as in Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia's ethnic communities declared their sovereignty and proclaimed their own republics. Indeed, as declarations of independence among the Republic's national communities, including its powerful Cossack Russian community peaked in late-1994, President Yeltsin sent federal forces into the Republic's capital of Cherkessk to maintain inter-communal peace.³¹⁷ Unlike Kabardino-Balkaria, however, the late-1990s did not bring a stabilization of inter-communal relations to Karachai-Cherkessia. Rather, during the period from 1999 through 2004, acute elite-level political contestation among and within the Republic's largest communities—Karachai, Cherkes, and Russians—led to mass ethno-nationalist mobilizations, the ethnicization of inter-communal tensions, and aggressive confrontations. Since then, tensions among and within the Republic's main communities have consistently led to political gridlock over the election and appointment of leaders. In 1999 and 2004 contested elections and interethnic rivalries led

³¹⁷ Shnirel'man, 144.

to mass demonstrations and riots.³¹⁸ Compared with Kabardino-Balkaria, post-Soviet Karachai-Cherkessia has exhibited far less political stability. However, high levels of ethno-political contestation in Karachai-Cherkessia, which are reflected in frequent leadership changes, have largely remained confined to mass protests and have not descended into violence.

In many ways Karachai-Cherkessia is a mirror image of Kabardino-Balkaria. In Kabardino-Balkaria, the larger of its two titular ethnicities, the Kabardians (currently 57 percent), speak a Circassian language and were not deported during the World War Two, and the titular minority, the Balkars (currently 12.7 percent), speak a Turkic language and were deported. In Karachai-Cherkessia, the Karachai form the majority titular nationality (currently 41 percent). The Karachai speak the same Turkic language as the Balkars and consider themselves ethnic brethren of the Balkars. Stalin deported the Karachai during the Second World War along with their Balkar co-ethnics. The Cherkes, Karachai-Cherkessia's minority titular ethnicity (currently 11.9 percent), are Circassians just like the Kabardians with whom they share a common Kabardino-Cherkes language. Indeed, many of the Cherkes are the descendants of Kabardians who fled Kabarda in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, before Russia established its control over the northwest (trans-Kuban) Caucasus.³¹⁹

Despite their similarities, several key differences between the ethnic makeup of Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachai-Cherkessia have contributed to their divergent levels of ethno-political contestation. Kabardino-Balkaria's population consists of three main

³¹⁸ Kazenin, 122-31.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 116-20.

communities: Kabardians (57.2 percent), Balkars (12.7 percent), and Russians and Cossacks (22.5 percent). Of these communities, Kabardino-Balkaria's Russian and Cossack communities are relatively quiescent politically,³²⁰ and ethno-political tensions revolve around the question of Balkar political representation and autonomy in a political system dominated by the Kabardian majority. To be sure, the Cossacks and Russians of Kabardino-Balkaria have their own national organizations, conduct cultural events, and periodically voice political discontent. Indeed, the collapse of the Soviet state, with which the Cossacks always had a troubled relationship, witnessed a Cossack cultural and political revival throughout the traditional regions of Cossack settlement and particularly in the southern borderlands of the Russian Federation. But, in comparison with Cossacks and Russians in other parts of the North Caucasus, particularly in neighboring Karachai-Cherkessia, these populations in Kabardino-Balkaria exhibit low levels of ethno-political mobilization. This relatively low level of political activity among Kabardino-Balkaria's Cossacks and Russians is a result of their long-standing acceptance that, as long as Russians are provided relatively proportionate political representation, Kabardino-Balkaria can be led by a representative of the Kabardian majority. In Karachai-Cherkessia, no ethnic community makes up an absolute majority and all of the Republic's communities have been politically active. Moreover, in addition to the two titular ethnicities—Karachai (41 percent) and Cherkes (12 percent)—three other communities

³²⁰ A number of Cossack ethno-cultural movements have been involved in the Republic's ethno-political debates since the early-1990s, but, when compared with the Kabardian and Balkar national movements, the Cossacks groups play a relatively minor political role in Kabardino-Balkaria. See, for example, "Ulozhenie (ustav) Tersko-Malkinskogo otdela (obshchiny) Terskogo kazachestva (19 oktriabria 1990 g.)," "Obrashenie Uchreditel'nogo kazach'ego kruga k Terskim kazakam i ikh potomkam, k zhiteliam Kabardino-Balkarii," and "Ulozhenie (ustav) Ekaterinogradskoi kazach'ei obshchiny Tersko-Malkinskogo otdela Terskogo kazachestva," in *Ethnopoliticheskaia situatsiia v Kabardino-Balkarii. Tom I*, 176-81, 187.

have the status of constituent nationalities whose languages have official status in the Republic: Russians (31.6 percent), Abaza (7.8 percent), and Nogais (3.3 percent). This ethnic diversity has meant that the Republic's leadership has had the difficult task of maintaining a mutually acceptable balance of representatives from each of these communities within the Republic's administrative and political structure. In Karachai-Cherkessia, balancing the political representation of five nationalities has proven far more difficult than balancing the three nationalities in Kabardino-Balkaria. Given the dominant role of ethnicity in post-Soviet politics, particularly in the Caucasus, Karachai-Cherkessia's ethnic makeup has led to situation whereby ethno-political movements often attempt to form informal coalitions during key political contests in order to defeat candidates whom they see as disrupting the ethnic balance in the Republic with their policies or platforms. Often this has meant Russians, Cherkes, and Abaza coming together to prevent Karachai domination in the Republic. In a testament to the stabilizing effect that authoritarianism often has on multi-ethnic states, the end of direct elections for governors and heads of republics in Russia since late 2004 has led to a modest decrease in the level of political gridlock and ethno-political contestation in Karachai-Cherkessia.³²¹

Tensions between Ingush and Ossetians played out differently. Before exploding into violent armed conflict in 1992, tensions had been long brewing between Ossetians and Ingush over the eastern half of Prigorodnyi District. This was an area of compact Ingush settlement located around the North Ossetian capital of Vladikavkaz. After the

³²¹Tetuev, 306.

deportation of the Ingush (and Chechens) in 1944, Stalin transferred this District from the dissolved Checheno-Ingush ASSR to the North Ossetian ASSR. The North Ossetian authorities then settled this district with 25,000 to 35,000 Ossetians from Georgia.³²² Most of this territory was *not* returned to the Ingush after their return. In total, North Ossetia received about one sixth of the pre-war Ingush territory. While many Ingush returned to Prigorodnyi District spontaneously, many more were unable to do so because Ossetians had settled in their former villages.³²³ During the last decades of Soviet rule, relations were tense between the North Ossetian government and Ingush elites. Indeed, on January 16-19, 1973, many Ingush took part in protests demanding the return of Prigorodnyi District to the Checheno-Ingush ASSR.³²⁴ In 1981, a similar demonstration held in Ordzhonikidze (Vladikavkaz) turned violent as MVD troops clashed with Ingush demonstrators.³²⁵

East Prigorodnyi District emerged as one of the Soviet Union's chief hotspots of inter-communal tension and potential ethnic conflict during perestroika. The Ingush and Ossetian national movements, "Niiskho" and "Adaman Tsadish," galvanized around the question of Prigorodnyi District.³²⁶ The Ingush national movements demanded the return of the District and the right-bank side of Vladikavkaz as one of the conditions of their full rehabilitation. The Ossetian national movement opposed any border changes. By 1991 the both sides began forming paramilitary units and sporadic clashes occurred with

³²² Tsutsiev, *Osetino-Ingushskii konflikt*, 71.

³²³ Polian, 200.

³²⁴ Ibid., 227

³²⁵ Tsutsiev, *Osetino-Ingushskii konflikt*, 80-81.

³²⁶ Tetuev, 148-49.

increasing frequency.³²⁷ The influx into Prigorodnyi District of thousands of Ossetian refugees from Georgia in the wake of the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia increased tensions in 1991 and 1992.³²⁸ After an Ossetian armored personnel carrier ran over an Ingush girl in late October 1992, Ossetian-Ingush tensions exploded into five days of violence, often taking the form of ethnic cleansing, leaving 600 dead, thousands wounded, 315 missing, and over 57,000 refugees.³²⁹ Most of the Ingush involved in clashes with Ossetian paramilitaries came from the Republic of Ingushetia, and the Ingush of Prigorodnyi District tried to remain neutral and often protected their Ossetian friends and neighbors. The conflict ended when the Russian Army intervened on the side of North Ossetia. The Russian Army intervened on the Ossetian side because Moscow did not want to see any border changes in Prigorodnyi District out of fears that this would set a precedent for territorial revisions elsewhere. After Russian federal forces imposed a ceasefire on October 31, both sides entered years of tense and usually abortive negotiations. In 1995, North Ossetian and Ingush leaders reach initial agreement by which Ingush refugees would be allowed to return to four of their villages in the District. In 2002, the North Ossetian and Ingush Presidents signed a new agreement that provided a mechanism for the eventual return of all Ingush refugees to Prigorodnyi District. This seemed to signal a final resolution to the conflict. However, Ossetian-Ingush tensions remain, sporadic violence persists, and North Ossetia remains a target of Ingush terror attacks; the most notable example of this being the Beslan hostage crisis of 2004.

³²⁷ Tsutsiev, *Osetino-Ingushskii konflikt*, 156-61.

³²⁸ Shnirel'man, 122.

³²⁹ Polian., 229.

Unlike these other ethnic conflicts and antagonisms, Chechnya's attempt to separate from the Russian Federation after the collapse of the Soviet Union is well known and well researched.³³⁰ Despite the fact that the Chechens and Ingush formed an absolute majority in their Autonomous Republic (the Checheno-Ingush ASSR), the local Russian-speaking population and the Russian-dominated administration treated Chechens and Ingush as second-class citizens during the last three decades of Soviet rule. After their return of exile, Chechens and Ingush were largely excluded from the Republic's industrial and oil-refining sectors and severely underrepresented in administration, education, and the Party leadership. By the late 1980s, Chechens and Ingush began to reverse this pattern of interethnic relations and force Russians and other Russian-speaking groups from the Republic's political and economic leadership positions. Indeed, the period from 1979 through 1989 witness an exodus of Russians from the Checheno-Ingush ASSR.³³¹ The process of Chechnya's separation from Russia began in the autumn of 1991 when Dzhokhar Dudaev, the leader of the National Congress of the Chechen People, the main opposition movement to the Soviet *nomenklatura* in Chechnya, ousted the Kremlin-backed, Soviet-era government of Doku Zavgayev after it came out in support of the hardline August coup in Moscow. After the results of a controversial referendum in October 1991 showed support for Chechen independence and confirmed Dudaev as president of the new Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, he unilaterally declared the

³³⁰ For an insightful collection of articles representing the variety of extant scholarship on the Chechen conflict see Richard Sakwa ed., *Chechnya from Past to Future* (London, Anthem Press, 2005).

³³¹ M.M. Ibragimov, "Ob osobennostiakh krizisa v Chechenskoi Respublike v 1990-e gody" in *Chechenskaia Respublika i chechentsy: istoriia i sovremennost'*, eds. Kh.I. Ibragimov et al. (Moscow: Nauka, 2006), 373

Republic's sovereignty and its independence from Soviet Union.³³² At the same time, Ingushetia declared its sovereignty but as a Republic within the Russian Federation. Russia fought two wars with Chechnya, from 1994 to 1996 and from 1999 to 2009, in an effort to forcibly reestablish control over the break-away Republic. The conflict has cost the lives of thousands of Russian soldiers, tens of thousands of Chechen lives, and created hundreds of thousands of Chechen refugees.³³³ And despite all this death and destruction, the conflict is not fully resolved: a low-intensity insurgency continues in Chechnya.

The Causes of Peace and Conflict

Why did Kabardian and Balkar separatism and interethnic tensions abate while they continued, with varying degrees of intensity, in neighboring regions with ostensibly similar histories of deportation and similar ethnic diversity? To answer this question we turn first to an examination of the reintegration and rehabilitation of the punished peoples during the last three decades of the Soviet Union.

Social Structure and Reintegration

The socio-economic disparities that contributed to the animosities behind many of the region's ethnicized inter-communal conflicts were products of the incomplete reintegration of "punished peoples" back into their homelands after 1957. In his study of

³³² Derlugian, 248-51.

³³³ On the humanitarian catastrophes of the Chechen Wars, see Anna Politkovskaya's journalistic accounts. Anna Politkovskaya, *A Dirty War: a Russian Reporter in Chechnya* (London: Harvill, 2001) and idem., *A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

nationalist mobilization and ethnic conflict in the Caucasus during the collapse of the Soviet Union, sociologist Georgi Derluguian “attribute[es]...the divergent trajectories of the North Caucasus republics...to variation in class structure.”³³⁴ Derluguian, in line with other scholars of ethnic conflict,³³⁵ views the presence of an ethnically stratified social structure and attendant competition among ethnic communities for positions of power as factors that increase the likelihood of this type of conflict. This is indeed part of the explanation.

Asserting that the Balkars had been reintegrated into society while the Chechens had not, Derluguian employs ethno-sociological analysis to explain the divergent fates of Kabardino-Balkaria and Chechnya. First, Derluguian argues that “after their return from exile...ethnic Balkar representatives had been judiciously incorporated into [the local power] network where they enjoyed the right to occupy the number two positions in every formal office and hierarchy.”³³⁶ It is important to add to this correct assessment that on the eve of perestroika, as we will see, there was very little difference in social structure between Kabardians and Balkars. To the extent that there was an ethnic division of labor, this division did not produce any clear benefits to the status of either community. Their similar social structures help explain why Balkar animosities toward Kabardians, despite appearances, were not as elevated as those elsewhere in the region, for example, between Ingush and Ossetians.

³³⁴ Derluguian, 261.

³³⁵ Suny focuses on these connections between class and ethnicity. See, *Revenge of the Past*, 29. Donald Horowitz, harkening back to Karl Deutsch, highlights problems of uneven socio-economic modernization among ethnic groups as a cause of ethnic conflict. Horowitz, 99-135.

³³⁶ Derluguian, 261.

Secondly, in explaining the lower level of resistance to and ultimate acceptance of the Soviet-era *nomenklatura* in Kabardino-Balkaria as compared with Chechnya, Derluguian rightly avers that “in Kabardino-Balkaria the Soviet nationality policy really seemed to operate as it was intended insofar as only very few ethnic Russians seem to have held positions of power.”³³⁷ As we have seen, after the April 1948 TsK Decree “On the Work of the Obkom of the Kabardian ASSR,”³³⁸ the Republic’s leadership pursued a robust nativization campaign that, by the mid-1950s, led to increases in native representation in traditionally Russian spheres. The nativization and reinvigorated Soviet modernization of the late-1940s and early 1950s created the preconditions for a strong and stable native *nomenklatura* in Kabardino-Balkaria to replace the Russian-dominated one that had formed in the 1930s and 1940s. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, precisely when the Balkars were returning, a relatively stable native *nomenklatura* of both Kabardians and, thanks to a Balkarization campaign, Balkars came to power in the Republic. Indeed, after twelve years of Russian first secretaries, in 1956, Timbor Mal’bakhov, a Kabardian, became First Secretary of the Obkom. An extreme example of the stability of national cadres that characterized later decades of Soviet rule,³³⁹ Mal’bakhov would lead Kabardino-Balkaria for nearly thirty years, longer than any First Secretary other than Lithuania’s Sniečkus.³⁴⁰ During the nationalist mobilizations of perestroika, unlike Chechnya where much of the *nomenklatura* was Russian, in

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ TsDNI KBR 1/1/1816: 369-70.

³³⁹ Mal’bakhov is absent in the list of senior cadres included in Suny’s insightful discussion on the longevity of national cadres in the era of “mature socialism.” See *Revenge of the Past*, 118-19.

³⁴⁰ On Mal’bakhov and his legacy, see B.Kh. Bgazhnokov ed., *T.K. Mal’bakhov: epokha bor’by i sozidaniia*. (Nalchik: Izdatel’svo M. i V. Kotliarovykh, 2007).

Kabardino-Balkaria, as Derluguian points out, “it was more difficult to mobilize the Kabardi[a]ns against their power elite because too many among the Kabardi[a]ns were themselves in the establishment or close to its members.”³⁴¹

In the Kabardino-Balkaria of the early 1990s, there was little socio-economic basis upon which ethno-national entrepreneurs from either side could mobilize their co-ethnics around the idea that they had been (and continued to be) systematically discriminated against by members of the other ethnicity. Moreover, as Donald Horowitz demonstrates, in colonial and post-colonial situations where two ethnic groups were treated relatively similarly by the colonial power, the dichotomy of “backward” versus “advanced” ethnicities that often fuels inter-communal tensions is usually absent.³⁴²

From the late-1950s through the 1980s, Soviet modernization led to a rapid, if incomplete, transformation of traditional Kabardian and Balkar societies. Statistical data indicate that, by the late-Soviet period, processes of urbanization, industrialization and associated phenomena had affected Kabardians and Balkars in near equal measure. They also demonstrate that the large socio-economic gaps that naturally existed between Kabardians and Balkars after the latter’s return had been overcome by the end of the Soviet period. Moreover, the Republic’s two titular nationalities were dominant, both in absolute and relative numbers, in the Republic’s privileged *nomenklatura* (upper-level management and technical jobs) and higher education.³⁴³ The relative balance in levels of

³⁴¹ Derluguian, 262.

³⁴² Horowitz, 166-67.

³⁴³ For a revealing late-Soviet ethno-sociological analysis of Kabardino-Balkaria, see Gardanov ed., *Novoe i traditsionnoe*.

modernization between Kabardians and Balkars is an important reason for the inter-communal peace between the two peoples.

Statistics on urbanization and employment illustrate some of the ways in which Kabardians and Balkars experienced near equal levels of modernization in the Soviet century. In 1925 nearly all Kabardians and Balkars were employed in agriculture.³⁴⁴ By the early 1980s only about a quarter of Kabardians and Balkars were so employed;³⁴⁵ in this they approximated the all-union average. In 1925 less than one percent of Kabardians and Balkars lived in cities.³⁴⁶ By 1979 about 37 percent of Kabardians and 50 percent of Balkars lived in the Republic's urban centers and by 1989 these figures stood at 43 percent and 59.2 percent.³⁴⁷ As we have seen, in 1948 Russians and other non-titulars dominated the Republic's *nomenklatura*. By 1990, Kabardians and Balkars, about 58 percent of the population, composed 72 percent of the Republic's *nomenklatura* positions.³⁴⁸ After their return, having been deprived of the benefits of national autonomy for thirteen years and limited in their schooling opportunities, Balkars were highly underrepresented in the *nomenklatura*. Two decades later, as a result of a Balkarization drive (i.e. the process of reintegrating Balkars back into the political, economic, and

³⁴⁴ Kabardino-Balkarskoe statisticheskoe biuro, *Kratkii statisticheskii sbornik Kabardino-Balkarskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti* (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe statisticheskoe biuro, 1925), 47.

³⁴⁵ Gardanov ed., *Novoe i traditsionnoe*, 53.

³⁴⁶ Kabardino-Balkarskoe statisticheskoe biuro, 25.

³⁴⁷ The larger Balkar urban population is due to the fact that, after their return, many Balkars settled in several suburbs around Nalchik rather than returning to their home villages in the mountains.

Gosudarstvennyi komitet SSSR po statistike, *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1979 goda., tom IV chast' 2*, (Moscow, Informatsionno-izdatel'skii tsentr, 1989-1990), 79-82, 113-15; Gosudarstvennyi komitet SSSR po statistike, *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1989 goda*, tom VII, chast' 3, 235, 319.

³⁴⁸ Kabardino-Balkarskoe respublikanskoe upravlenie statistiki, *Narodnoe khoziaistvo KBSSR v 1990 g.*, (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe respublikanskoe upr. stat., 1991), 54.

culture/educational structure of the Republic),³⁴⁹ only about five percent more of the Kabardian population than the Balkar population was employed in *nomenklatura* positions.³⁵⁰ The greatest difference in the social structure between Kabardians and Balkars was among urban workers. Compared with the Kabardians, 11 percent more urban Balkars was employed in unskilled manual labor (the difference was 7.4 percent in rural areas). Here the exile experience reflected a generational gap, with those who came of age in exile disproportionately represented in unskilled positions.³⁵¹ This socio-economic gap had narrowed even further by the eve of the Soviet collapse. In terms of education, by 1990, the share of Kabardians and Balkars studying in higher education was higher than their shares of the Republic's population (53.3 percent to 48.2 percent and 14.5 percent to 9.4 percent respectively), while Russians were represented in higher education in the Republic significantly less than their share of the Republic's overall population (21.2 percent to 32 percent). Indeed, by the end of the Soviet era Balkars had slightly higher education levels than Kabardians.³⁵²

The absence of a well-established native ruling elite was the primary difference between Karachai-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria during the last decades of the Soviet Union. The social structure of Karachai-Cherkessia resembled that of Kabardino-Balkaria in that there was little divergence between the Republic's titular ethnicities, especially in terms of levels of education and urbanization. There were some differences in the ethnic division of labor in the Republic. Slightly more Karachai were (and still are)

³⁴⁹ On the initial results of the Balkarization campaign from 1957 to 1963 see TsDNI KBR 1/2/1677 (1963): 1-12.

³⁵⁰ Gardanov, *Novoe i traditsionnoe*, 52.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 51.

³⁵² Ibid., 234.

occupied in agriculture than are the Cherkes and Abaza because the Republic's industrial enterprises are concentrated closer to the Cherkes and Abaza villages in the north of the Republic.³⁵³ However, the principal difference between the two Republics lay at the top of the social hierarchy. While Kabardians and Balkars were represented in their Republic's Soviet-era *nomenklatura* in slightly greater proportion to their share in the population, the representation of Cherkes and especially Karachai among their republic's *nomenklatura* was well below each group's share in population. Rather, Russians—usually sent in from outside the Oblast—dominated the Soviet-era *nomenklatura* in Karachai-Cherkessia. Indeed, in the reestablished Karachai-Cherkes Autonomous Oblast during the post-1957 period, the First Secretary of the Karachai-Cherkes Obkom was always a Russian.³⁵⁴ Part of the explanation for the absence of a native First Secretary was that throughout the Soviet period Russians were Karachai-Cherkessia's most numerous community. But Russians were not an absolute majority. Moreover, the Regional (Krai) Party's consistent appointment of Russian outsiders as First Secretaries in Karachai-Cherkessia was an exception to the unofficial rule (also broken in the Chechen-Ingush case) that non-Russian Republics and autonomous regions be led, at least nominally, by a representative of the titular nationality. But Karachai underrepresentation, which many Karachai interpreted as intentional discrimination, was endemic throughout the top leadership and managerial positions of the Autonomous Oblast. According to I. Shamanov, B. Tambieva and L. Abrekova, Karachai made up, on

³⁵³ Kazenin, 114.

³⁵⁴ S.A. Arutiunov, Ia.S. Smirnova, and G.A. Sergeeva, *Etnokul'turnaia situatsiia v karachaevo-cherkesskoi avtonomnoi oblasti* (Moscow: Institut etnologii i antropologii AN SSSR, 1990), 2.

average, only about 5 percent of the regional Party Committee and 20 percent of the Oblast Executive Committee. They were also underrepresented at all levels in law enforcement, but particularly at the top where Karachai occupied 11 percent of the leadership positions in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.³⁵⁵ Even in the main Karachai urban center of Karachaevesk, with its overwhelmingly Karachai population, officials in Moscow and Stavropol (the regional center to which Karachai-Cherkessia was subordinate) consistently appointed Russians to the leadership of the City's Party Committee, police, prosecutor, Justice Department, and KGB.³⁵⁶

Karachai-Cherkessia's fluid ethno-political situation stands in contrast to the relatively stable ethno-political divisions of power that have characterized Kabardino-Balkaria's transition from Soviet to post-Soviet rule. Changes to Karachai-Cherkessia's ethnic division of power since the early 1990s have led to increased interethnic tensions. During the 1990s, the Karachai, whose share of the population surpassed that of the Russians and expanded from 31 percent in 1989 to 38.5 percent by 2002 (a result of a high birthrate, low Russian birthrate, and high Russian emigration from the Caucasus), began to reverse the trend of Russian domination of the region's political, administrative and economic spheres. A sense of growing Karachai dominance in the Republic in the 1990s upset Karachai-Cherkessia's other minorities, particularly its heavily-Cossack "Russian" community.³⁵⁷ In 1994, the pro-Cossack political organization "Rus'" declared

³⁵⁵ I.M. Shabanov, B.A. Tambieva, and L.O. Abrekova, *Nakazany po natsional'nomu prizaku* (Cherkessk: Karachaevo-Cherkesskii Filial Moskovskogo Otkrytogo Sotsial'nogo Universiteta, 1999), 40-41.

³⁵⁶ Artiunov, Smirnova, and Sergeeva, 9.

³⁵⁷ Kazenin, 124; I put Russian in quotations because Cossacks were historically of mixed ethnic background. The Cossacks' historic identification with the Russian state has recently blended with an ethnic Russian nationalism.

the formation of a Zelenchuk-Urup Republic in southwest of Karachai-Cherkessia, causing clashes between Cossacks and local police forces. The Cossacks of Karachai-Cherkessia called for “Ataman rule” and their representative in the Duma declared that the Karachai are “doomed to complete elimination.”³⁵⁸ Even members of the other indigenous minorities, namely the ethnically related Cherkes and Abaza peoples, were concerned with the growing Karachai influence.³⁵⁹ If, during the late-Soviet period, many among the region’s non-Karachai minorities generally felt that their interests were relatively well represented within their Oblast’s administrative, political and economic structure, the growing Karachai dominance in the post-Soviet period led to a sense among the Republic’s other minorities that the Karachai leadership was appointing its co-ethnics or even members of their extended family networks to the Republic’s most powerful positions.³⁶⁰ At the First Congress of the Cherkes People in December 1994, the Cherkes national elites declared that their people were unwilling to remain in a republic with the Karachai and called for the creation of a Cherkes Autonomous Oblast within Stavropol Krai.³⁶¹ This sense of ethnic imbalance, which was in many ways a reaction to a different kind of imbalance during the Soviet period, has led to a highly unstable political situation in post-Soviet Karachai-Cherkessia.

A comparison of the situation in Kabardino-Balkaria to that of Checheno-Ingushetia reveals a number of glaring differences: an ethnically stratified social structure characterized by disparities in modernization levels existed in Checheno-Ingushetia but

³⁵⁸ Schnirel'man, 144

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Kazenin, 127-29.

³⁶¹ Shnirel'man, 144.

not Kabardino-Balkaria; Chechens and Ingush had historic animosities with their Russian, Cossack, and Ossetian neighbors; and in terms of demographics and ethno-territorial structure, post-1957 Checheno-Ingushetia looked very different from pre-1944 Checheno-Ingushetia. These differences are indicators of levels of ethnic discrimination and feelings of insecurity and backwardness vis-à-vis neighboring groups absent in the Kabardino-Balkar case and less pronounced in the Karachai-Cherkes case.

Compared with Kabardino-Balkaria, where Kabardians and Balkars were represented relatively evenly throughout the social hierarchy, there was much greater social stratification in Checheno-Ingushetia between the native titular nationalities at the bottom and the Republic's predominantly-Russian settler population at the top. Within the Checheno-Ingush ASSR, the Ingush, as a result of their location around larger urban centers, demonstrated slightly higher levels of socio-economic development than the Chechens. Though compared with all-Russian averages, the Chechens and Ingush consistently ranked toward the bottom in terms of levels of employment, education and other indicators of socio-economic status. Despite the fact that Checheno-Ingushetia had a larger industrial economy than Kabardino-Balkaria, by the 1980s the vast majority (70 percent) of Chechens and Ingush were still employed in agriculture, compared to about 25 percent of Kabardians and Balkars.³⁶² According to renowned Russian ethnographer Valery Tishkov, "in the period from 1964 through 1991, the Checheno-Ingush economy was divided between two sectors: a 'Russian' economy focused on oil refining, machine construction, and socio-economic infrastructure and a 'national' [read native] economy

³⁶² M.I. Alkhazurov, "Obrazovanie i sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe razvitiie ChIASSR," in *Chechenskaia Respublika i chechentsy*, 316.

dominated by small commodity agriculture, seasonal labor migration, and construction.”³⁶³ For example, of the 50,000 workers in Grozny’s oil industry, only several hundred were Chechens and Ingush. Despite the fact that Chechens and Ingush had the highest levels of unemployment in the RSFSR and that the Republic’s industrial sector experienced frequent labor shortages, the Russian-dominated leadership of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR did little to attract Chechens and Ingush into industry. With 20 percent employment in white-collar jobs (*umstvennyi trud*), Chechens ranked thirty-fourth among Russia’s forty largest nationalities. Accordingly, processes of urbanization affected Chechens and Ingush far less than they did the Kabardians and Balkars. In 1989, 23.5 percent of Chechens and 35.4 percent of Ingush resided in urban centers, compared to 43 percent of Kabardians and 59.2 percent of Balkars.³⁶⁴ Finally, among all titular nationalities of the RSFSR, Chechens had the smallest proportion of academic and scientific specialists.³⁶⁵

Checheno-Ingushetia’s ethnically stratified social structure was partly a result of low levels of schooling and higher education among Ingush and particularly Chechens. When the Chechens and Ingush returned from exile in the late 1950s and early 1960s there was, understandably given the reality of the special-settlement regime, a large discrepancy between their levels of education and those of the Republic’s mainly-Russian

³⁶³ V.A. Tishkov, *Obshchestvo v vooruzhennom konflikte: etnografiia chechenskoi voyny*. (Moscow: Nauka, 2001), 116.

³⁶⁴ Ibragimov, 369-70.

³⁶⁵ M.P. Ovkhadov, “Obrazovatel’nye i iazykovye problem natsional’noi politiki sovetskogo perioda v Chechenskoi Respublike,” in *Chechenskaia Respublika i chechentsy*, 354.

settler population.³⁶⁶ In contrast to the Karachai and Balkar cases, the efforts of Checheno-Ingushetia's leadership to expand education levels among Chechen and Ingush were grossly inadequate. The educational levels among Ingush and particularly Chechens never caught up to all-Russian levels. By 1989, for every thousand Chechens and Ingush aged 15 and older, those with higher education numbered 45 and 60 respectively. This figure stood at 111 for Balkars and 110 for Karachai, just below the all-Russian average of 113. Indeed, Balkar and Karachai levels of higher education were even greater than those of the other titular groups in their regions, groups who were not subjected to forced deportation during World War Two; these figures stood at 88 for Kabardians and 108 for Cherkess.³⁶⁷ Chechen higher education levels were 2.5 times less than the Russian average and 2.2 times less than the other deported peoples of the RSFSR. Checheno-Ingushetia had the highest proportion of residents without any middle education (grades five through eleven) of all autonomous oblasts and republics of the RSFSR.³⁶⁸ These low levels of schooling and higher education contributed, in large measure, to the socio-economic gap between Chechens and Ingush, on the one hand, and the Republic's settler population on the other.

Finally, given these figures for education and employment, it should come as little surprise that Chechens and Ingush were poorly represented among their Republic's *nomenklatura*. Indeed, Chechen and Ingush representation in positions of leadership in

³⁶⁶ For example, in the 1965-66 school year, Chechens and Ingush represented 14 and 3.8 percent of the study body of Checheno-Ingushetia's higher education institutions. Statisticheskoe upravlenie Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR, *Narodnoe khoziastvo Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR za 1966-1970*. (Groznyi: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1971), 92.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ovkhadov, 353-54.

the Party, administration, and economy was even lower than among the Karachai. As M. Ibragimov points out, “all of the key leadership positions were occupied by non-Chechens. No Chechen or Ingush ever held the post of First Secretary of the Obkom, Minister of Internal Affairs, head of the KGB, or Prosecutor.”³⁶⁹ In contrast to other punished peoples, there was no growth in the number of Chechens in leadership positions between 1959 and 1989. At the beginning of the 1980s, despite making up over sixty percent of the Republic’s population, Chechens and Ingush composed only about 25 percent of the Republic’s administrative apparatus.³⁷⁰

The Chechens’ low levels of socio-economic development, reinforced by institutionalized discrimination in employment and education, and the lack of a strong native *nomenklatura*, confirm Derluguian’s assessment of the socio-economic roots of the Russo-Chechen conflict. As Derluguian argues, “the possibility of a revolutionary outcome in Chechnya arose from the peculiar composition and proportions of its social and demographic structure.”³⁷¹ Derluguian focuses on the role of “sub-proletarians” in turning ethno-political contestation into violent rebellion. Derluguian defines sub-proletarians mostly by what they are not: they are not fully urban nor do they remain completely rural; their primary income does not come from salaried or wage labor; they flout middle-class conventions; they do not have stable life patterns; and they are not loyal to the state and see it as a nuisance. Because their “lives are permeated with brutality,” sub-proletarian males have a propensity for “aggressiveness,” hyper-

³⁶⁹ Ibragimov, 371.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Derluguian, 243.

“masculinity,” “vandalism,” and “seemingly unmotivated hooliganism.” In Caucasia, “young sub-proletarian toughs...bring daggers and guns to rallies” and are “the romantic sub-intellectuals sporting *papaha* hats” and folk dress. Under normal circumstances they “might be ridiculed” for their unconventional and, to the Soviet mind, uncultured (*bezkul'turnoe*) behavior, but “in times of state breakdown, the sub-proletarian masses can raise their collective voice and become the ‘street crowd.’”³⁷² According to Derluguian, “the presence of sizable sub-proletarian sectors in the Caucasus made violence more likely.”³⁷³ In the idiom of Derluguian’s world-system analysis, sub-proletarians are the largest and fastest-growing segment of the world’s population...in peripheral...areas” such as the Caucasus.³⁷⁴ The Chechen population had an especially large sub-proletarian stratum as a result of the Soviet state’s lack of interest in reintegrating the Chechen population into their home society after their return from exile.

If the presence of sub-proletarians made violence more likely during the nationalist mobilizations of the early 1990s, the presence of a full-fledged native *nomenklatura* that was accepted by the majority of the people could de-escalate tensions and “potentially deflect oppositional pressure and channel it into vertical bargaining with the patrons in Moscow.”³⁷⁵ As seen by the decisive ouster of Kremlin-backed Doku Zavgaev, Checheno-Ingushetia did not have a strong native *nomenklatura* capable of co-opting its national movements in the same way that Valerii Kokov was able to do in

³⁷² Ibid., 150-51.

³⁷³ Ibid., 207.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 150.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 237.

Kabardino-Balkaria and as Vladimir Khubiev did, though with less success, in Karachai-Cherkessia.

Socio-economic factors had a less direct impact on the Ossetian-Ingush conflict over Prigorodnyi District, than they did on the Chechen conflict. During the late-Soviet period, the socio-economic status of the Ingush in Prigorodnyi District, and in North Ossetia generally, was higher than that of the greater Ingush population in Chechno-Ingushetia. The relative well-being of North Ossetia's Ingush population was the result of Soviet nationalities policy in the region. Recognizing the potential for Ossetian-Ingush conflict in Prigorodnyi District, particularly after Ingush elites began to demand the return of the District in 1973, the Soviet state and the leadership of North Ossetia initiated an affirmative-action campaign aimed at fully integrating the Ingush minority into the socio-economic and political structure of the Republic. In the 1970s and 1980s the North Ossetian government allocated extra funds for the development of the infrastructure and economy of Prigorodnyi District. The North Ossetian Council of Ministers and Obkom increased quotas for Ingush in institutions of higher education and in the Party. Indeed, the Soviet state held up Prigorodnyi District as a model of peaceful interethnic co-existence and the embodiment of the Soviet "friendship of peoples."³⁷⁶

These integrative efforts did not produce the desired result for the Soviet state and North Ossetia. According to Artur Tsutsiev, "the rupture in the standard of living and the 'qualitative' state-sponsored gap, in terms of economic indicators, between Prigorodnyi District and other districts belonging to Ingushetia (sic) only facilitated the perception

³⁷⁶ Tsutsiev, *Osetino-Ingushskii konflikt*, 116-18.

among Ingush elites of Prigorodnyi District as an essential economic center for Ingushetia.”³⁷⁷ The socio-economic marginalization of Ingush communities within Checheno-Ingushetia combined with the relative socio-economic well-being of the Ingush in North Ossetia produced heightened irredentist sentiments among Ingush in Checheno-Ingushetia. In the minds of Ingush nationalists, Prigorodnyi District became the antidote to the Ingush people’s economic depression and psychological trauma created by Stalin’s attempted genocide in 1944.³⁷⁸

Kabardino-Balkar Relations and the Politics of Rehabilitation

While tensions in Kabardino-Balkaria were in many ways less noticeable and less violent than in the neighboring republics in the 1990s, there was nonetheless a powerful politics of ethnicity and nationality at work in Republic. The historical memory of the Stalinist deportations and the experience of exile played a decisive role in Balkar ethno-political discourse during national mobilizations of the 1990s. Indeed, the idea of full rehabilitation became the issue around which Balkars mobilized during the early 1990s. The ability of Balkar ethno-political entrepreneurs to sustain high levels of ethnic mobilization foundered because the Balkars’ successful reintegration over the late-Soviet period meant that the most pressing and difficult-to-achieve facet of rehabilitation—socio-economic and ethno-territorial rehabilitation—had been achieved before the Balkars’ rehabilitation campaign got off the ground. In paying moderate attention to other

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 117.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 84.

aspects of the rehabilitation program for repressed peoples, officials in Moscow and Nalchik disarmed the Balkar ethno-political entrepreneurs' best weapon for mobilization.

The first phase of the rehabilitation of the punished peoples, during Khrushchev's "thaw," was limited to state efforts at the central and republican levels, of varying degrees of success, toward the socio-economic *reintegration* of the deported peoples' communities back into their North Caucasus homelands and the restoration of their national autonomies. The success or failure of the punished peoples' socio-economic reintegration was the most important medium-term historical factor structuring inter-communal relations during perestroika. In all cases, however, these first rehabilitation measures were incomplete. The Soviet state did not confront other aspects of rehabilitation besides socio-economic reintegration: for example, the continuing psychological trauma of deportation and the negative social stigma stemming from the unjust accusations of mass treason; property losses incurred through deportation; the deleterious effects of the conditions of life in the special settlements; and the ways in which discrepancies between pre-deportation and post-return ethno-territorial borders hindered socio-economic reintegration.

When glasnost' allowed for the creation of a more open civil society and released the floodgates of political activity in the Soviet Union, the nascent national movements of the "punished peoples" of the North Caucasus galvanized around the goal of full political, territorial, socio-economic, and cultural rehabilitation.³⁷⁹ The Karachai national movement *Dzhamagat*, the Balkar *Töre*, the Congress of the Chechen People, and the

³⁷⁹Polian, 225-27.

People's Council of Ingushetia, in addition to the national movements of other deported peoples outside of the North Caucasus (Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars, Meskhetian Turks), all placed full rehabilitation at the top of their programs. These movements united their efforts under the Confederation of Repressed Peoples of Russia.³⁸⁰

The April 26, 1991, RSFSR Law "On the Rehabilitation of the Repressed Peoples" included provisions that spoke broadly to the demands of these national movements and, therefore, help explain what these movements meant by "full rehabilitation." Article One called for the "recognition of repressive acts against these peoples as illegal and criminal." In this regard, the law also confirmed recent Supreme Soviet decrees nullifying the Stalin-era decrees on the deportations. Article Three called for the "the reestablishment of [the repressed peoples'] territories and national-state formations...as they existed before their anti-constitutional dissolution." Article Four criminalized "agitation and propaganda aimed at the prevention of the rehabilitation of repressed peoples." Article Nine stipulated that "losses incurred by the repressed peoples as a result of state repression must be returned." Article Ten explained that as part of the "social rehabilitation of the repressed peoples," employment during the period of deportation would count triple toward retirement and those already retired would see an increase in their pensions for each year of work under the special settlement regime. Article Eleven called for the "cultural rehabilitation" of the repressed peoples, including "the return of the former historic names of villages."³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno*, 96.

³⁸¹ "Zakon Rossiiskoi Sovetskoi Federativnoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki 'O reabilitatsii repressirovannykh narodov' (26 apreliia 1991 g.)," in Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 415-17.

The reemergence of the land question in post-Soviet Kabardino-Balkaria, a consequence of the problem of delimiting the borders of the self-proclaimed Kabardian and Balkar Republics, was also directly linked to the question of Balkar rehabilitation. The program of the Balkar national movement called for the “reestablishment of the administrative-territorial districts of Balkaria with the same land reserves that existed on January 1, 1944.”³⁸² When the process of the Balkars’ rehabilitation began in 1957, the Kabardino-Balkar government restored the vast majority of the Balkar villages but it did not restore the Balkars’ districts as they existed on the eve of deportation. On January 1, 1944, the Balkars were a majority in all four of their districts of compact settlement. Despite occupying most of their pre-deportation territory after their return, the Balkars, as a result of redistricting, resided primarily in three districts (Baksanskii, Chegemskii, and Sovetskii) and only formed a majority in *one* of them (Sovetskii). During the Soviet period this discrepancy between the Balkars’ pre-deportation and post-1957 borders was a nonissue. However, during perestroika the districts question became an important part of the Balkars’ platform for full rehabilitation for two reasons: 1) competitive elections meant that the Balkars could only count on being the dominant political bloc in one district; and 2) in order to claim their ethno-territorial sovereignty (with an eye toward possible separation from Kabarda), the Balkar elites needed the reconstitution of relatively homogenous Balkar districts. Indeed, the first proclamation of the Republic of Balkaria in November 1991 was motivated in part by the Kabardino-Balkar leadership’s

³⁸² “Postanovlenie Pervogo s’ezda balkarskogo naroda ‘O zadachakh po polnomu vosstanovleniiu i realizatsii politicheskikh, ekonomicheskikh i sotsial’no-kul’turnykh prav balkarskogo naroda,” in *Etnopoliticheskaia situatsiia v Kabardino-Balkarii, Tom II*, 175-77.

unwillingness to restore the January 1944 Balkar districts.³⁸³ However, compared with the territorial grievances of other deported peoples, those of the Balkars were relatively minor. The relative unimportance of the Balkars' territorial grievances is evidenced by the peaceful de-escalation of Kabardino-Balkar tensions despite the fact that the national-territorial aspects of the Balkars' rehabilitation program were not met in full. Indeed, in his December 1996 address to the people of Kabardino-Balkaria, Balkar national leader Beppaev justified his call for continued Kabardino-Balkar unity and a de-escalation of tensions by citing the "work toward the rehabilitation of the Balkar people by the state organs of the Kabardino-Balkar Republic."³⁸⁴

During perestroika and the immediate post-Soviet years, officials in Moscow and Nalchik made substantial efforts to facilitate the full rehabilitation of the Balkar people. On 14 November 1989 the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued the "Declaration on the Recognition of Repressive Acts against Peoples Subjected to Forced Deportation as Illegal and Criminal and the Securing of their Rights."³⁸⁵ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Boris Yeltsin, representing the Russian Federation, issued formal apologies to the deported peoples of Russia, including the Balkars.³⁸⁶ Moreover, in 1991 a Russian federal law "On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression" allocated monetary compensation to victims of the deportations. The Russian government formed commissions to develop a plan for further rehabilitation measures for each deported

³⁸³ Shnirel'man, 127-28.

³⁸⁴ Quoted in Tetuev, 179.

³⁸⁵ "Deklaratsiia Verkhovnogo soveta Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik 'O priznanii nezakonnykh i prestupnykh repressivnykh aktov protiv narodov, podvergnutym nasil'stvennomu pereseleniiu, i obespechenii ikh prav' (14 noiabria 1989 g.)," in Sabanchiev, *Balkartsy*, 410-11.

³⁸⁶ "Prezident Rossiiskoi Federatsii balkarskomu narodu (5 marta 1994 g.)," in *ibid.*, 425.

nationality. In 1996 the Russian government enacted a four-year federal program “On the Socio-Economic Development and National-Cultural Rebirth of the Balkar People.”³⁸⁷ On the republican level, in addition to a series of important symbolic gestures (official condemnation of the deportations; the designation of March 8 as the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Violent Deportation of the Balkar People and March 28 as the Day of the Rebirth of the Balkar People; and the construction of a memorial to the victims of the deportation), the Kabardino-Balkar government allowed Balkar villages to vote on the reconstitution of their pre-deportation districts. Balkars voted in favor of reestablishing Elbrus District according to its January 1944 borders. The Kabardino-Balkar Parliament decreed the formation of Elbrus District on May 5, 1994, giving the Balkars an absolute majority in a second district.³⁸⁸ In the cases of reestablishing the former Khulam-Bezengi District and changing the borders of Chegem District to match its January 1944 composition, a combination of official governmental opposition and dubious referendum results led to the scraping of these further redistricting changes.³⁸⁹ In addition to federal compensation for the Balkar survivors of the deportation, the government of Kabardino-Balkaria also provided monetary compensation to Balkar families who lost property as a result of the deportation.³⁹⁰ In placing Sufian Beppaev in charge of his Commission for Human Rights and the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression, President Kokov gave this former leader of the Balkar separatist movement great control over the distribution of funds

³⁸⁷ Borov, “Deportsiia i reabilitatsiia,” 364; Sabanchiev, *Byli soslany navechno*, 99-101.

³⁸⁸ Karov, *Aministrativno-territorial'nye preobrazovaniia*, 556.

³⁸⁹ Kazenin, 71.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 90-104.

allocated for Balkar compensation and rehabilitation.³⁹¹ This position benefited Beppaev symbolically, but also gave him a position from which to distribute state funds widely and build his political patronage networks.

Given the relative socio-economic equality between Kabardians and Balkars and the lack of major discrepancies between the Balkars' ethno-territorial status in 1944 and 1994, the leaders of the Balkar national movement were unable to sustain heightened levels of mass mobilization on the basis of calls for full rehabilitation. Through the co-opting of Balkar elites and the pursuit of rehabilitation measures, the leadership of the Russian Federation's nascent Kabardino-Balkar Republic managed to stabilize inter-communal relations and marginalize the proponents of Balkar separatism. Balkar grievances, however, are never far from the surface in contemporary Kabardino-Balkaria and changes or impending changes of officials and patronage networks within the Republic's administrative apparatus are frequently accompanied by a resurfacing of the Balkar question.³⁹² Most recently, in 2011, when Kabardino-Balkar President Arsen Konokov's first term in office was coming to a close, Balkar ethno-political entrepreneurs associated with the banned oppositional organization Council of Elders of the Balkar People increased their mobilizational activity in hopes of pushing Moscow to appoint a new Kabardian leader who would be more sympathetic to Balkar issues.³⁹³

Post-Soviet rehabilitation measures ostensibly contributed to the easing of Kabardino-Balkar tensions precisely because these tensions had little to do with problems

³⁹¹ Ibid., 77.

³⁹² Ibid., 84-97.

³⁹³ See, for example, "Sovet stareishin balkarskogo naroda KBR obratilsia k prezidentu RF," *Iuzhnyi Federal'nyi*, last modified February 11, 2011, <http://www.u-f.ru/Article/eksklyuziv/639403>

of the Balkars' rehabilitation. Post-Soviet Kabardino-Balkar tensions were and, to the extent that they continue, are based on the difficulties of adapting a system of inter-communal accommodation and symbiosis to Russia's new political and economic realities. Balkar national elites couched their people's legitimate post-Soviet problems in terms of rehabilitation because the discourse of rehabilitation provided a layer of juridical legitimacy (based on Russian laws on the rehabilitation of repressed peoples) and added emotional appeal to their claims. When the first of these post-Soviet challenges to the historic pattern of Kabardino-Balkar relations was overcome with the co-optation and incorporation of Balkar elites, most notably Beppaev, into the post-Soviet *nomenklatura*, the Balkar elites cited progress toward rehabilitation as their reason for foregoing their confrontation with the Kabardian majority because rehabilitation was the issue on which they had forged the Balkar national movement.

By contrast, post-Soviet rehabilitation measures did little to solve inter-communal conflicts in which the other deported peoples were embroiled. Though highly divergent from each other in their levels of intensity, these conflicts were, at least in part, based on real problems associated with their incomplete or failed rehabilitations. In the Karachai, Ingush and Chechen cases, lingering socio-economic contradictions and ethno-territorial disputes, associated in part with the inadequacies of these peoples' reintegration after 1957, ran too deep and were too intractable to allow for a peaceful resolution through the co-optation of elites and rehabilitation measures like monetary compensation and symbolic gestures.

The possibility of full territorial rehabilitation of the Karachai is precluded by the fact this would entail a significant adjustment of borders in the North Caucasus and that many Karachai now live in parts of Karachai-Cherkessia outside the 1944 borders of the Karachai Autonomous Oblast.³⁹⁴ As we have seen, Karachai-Cherkessia is the mildest of these three other cases of ethno-political conflict. Nevertheless, tensions here between the Karachai majority and the four minority nationalities were partially a result of discrepancies between the pre-deportation and the post-1957 territorial borders of the Karachai people. In Karachai-Cherkessia the type of border changes implied by the territorial rehabilitation of the Karachai people to their pre-deportation status are infeasible. After a brief experiment with a united Karachai-Cherkes Autonomous Oblast from 1922 to 1926, conflicts over political representation led the Soviet state to allow the separation of the Karachai and Cherkes into their own autonomous regions.³⁹⁵ Therefore, when the Soviet state decided to form a combined Karachai-Cherkes Autonomous Oblast in the wake of the return of the Karachai from exile in 1957, this was not a return to the pre-war ethno-territorial status quo.

During the late-Soviet period, the fact that Russians, Cherkes and others in Karachai-Cherkessia had not, except for a brief and fraught four years in the early-1920s, resided in a common administrative unit with the Karachai, contributed to a general reluctance to integrate the Karachai into positions of power and leadership in the Oblast. Unlike the Balkars in Kabardino-Balkaria, the Karachai were seen as outsiders in their post-1957 autonomy, and the type of economic interdependence that existed between

³⁹⁴ Kazenin, 116.

³⁹⁵ Bugai, *Severnyi Kavkaz. Gosudarstvennoe stroitel'stvo*, 153-66.

Kabardians and Balkars, did not exist among the Karachai and their neighbors. This led to a mistrust of the Karachai and lingering accusations of Karachai treason during the War from the region's dominant Cossack Russian community. Indeed, the Russian-dominated Karachai-Cherkes Obkom promoted these accusations.³⁹⁶ For example, on June 1, 1979, the First Secretary of the Karachai-Cherkes Obkom, V. Mukharovskii, ordered the construction of a monument on the road outside of the population tourist resort of Lower Teberda to orphan children who were killed by "Karachai Bandits" in August 1942.³⁹⁷ To say nothing of the tactlessness of the monument's phrasing, Karachai involvement in this commemorated incident is unsubstantiated. In contemporary Karachai-Cherkes politics, the thirty-year precedent of a separate Cherkes autonomous region looms large in discussions of the preservation of a united Karachai-Cherkes Republic.

The Ingush consider their rehabilitation incomplete because they have not received control over their former lands in North Ossetia's Prigorodnyi District and many of the Ingush who fled the conflict zone in 1992 are still living as refugees. Ossetian elites, however, buoyed by Kremlin support, are staunch in their refusal to return this land. Until Ingush demands for full territorial rehabilitation are met (an unlikely prospect), compensation for the victims of deportation and the construction of ornate and expensive memorials, like the "nine towers" complex outside of Nazran, will do little to ease the feeling among the Ingush that the systematic injustice against them at the hands of the Russian state and their loyal Ossetian lackeys continues.

³⁹⁶ Shamanov, Tambieva, Abrekova, 38-41.

³⁹⁷ Shnirel'man, 457.

Although Chechens harbored resentment at not being allowed to reestablish many of their mountain auls after their return, territorial rehabilitation to their pre-deportation status was not *the* major concern of many Chechens. Here, calls for full political and socio-economic rehabilitation quickly developed into calls for full sovereignty and independence for the Chechen nation. The inferior socio-economic and political position of Chechens in their own Republic produced in large part by the influx of Russians during the period of Chechen exile became part of a long list of grievances upon which the Chechens built their case for separation.

The Long View: Structures and Patterns

The divergent ethno-political situations in the North Caucasus in 1990s, between the two extremes of Kabardino-Balkaria and Chechnya, were not simply the products of different social structures that had formed since the late-1950s. Nor is the primordialist explanation, offered by one Western journalist, that “the Chechens are different...comparable with no other people in the Caucasus,” acceptable.³⁹⁸ Rather, the divergent post-Soviet fates of the peoples of the North Caucasus reflect, and provide insight into, deeper historical trends and patterns.

The inclusion of the Balkars in the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR’s *nomenklatura* after 1957 and, more recently, in the post-Soviet leadership of the Kabardino-Balkar Republic, was the continuation of a long-standing, unofficial power-sharing arrangement that developed during the beginning of the Soviet rule and had its roots in the historic

³⁹⁸ Karny, 363.

Kabardino-Balkar symbiosis. Though the political parity among Kabardians, Balkars, and Russians envisaged by the 1922 “Conditions for the Unification of Kabarda and Balkaria” proved ephemeral, the reservation for Balkars of key leadership positions in the Republic dating back to the 1920s ensured Balkar political quietism within a system in which they were a minority, a system that would always be led by Kabardians.³⁹⁹ In the post-Soviet period, as Derluguian points out, the prospect of democracy that emerged during perestroika did not bode well for the Balkars.⁴⁰⁰ In order to overcome the ethno-political impasse that post-Soviet democratization represented for Kabardino-Balkaria, in 1996 the Kabardian and Balkar elites agreed to continue their long-standing practices of power-sharing and dividing leadership positions in a way that was acceptable for all of the Republic’s principal ethnic communities.⁴⁰¹

However beneficial close economic and political relations with the Kabardians may have been for the Balkars, over the *longue durée* this relationship has never been based on equality or parity of political and economic power. During periods of state collapse, the Balkars have sought to end their subordinate position vis-à-vis the Kabardians. The Kabardino-Balkar symbiosis (based on economic, political, social, and familial ties) means that despite the inequality and subordination when push comes to shove, the choice of both Balkars and Kabardians has been for compromise rather than violence. This choice for compromise in the 1990s—the acceptance of the new political establishment on the condition that the Balkars would retain their traditional levels of

³⁹⁹ Dзамикхов and Кумакхов, 261-68.

⁴⁰⁰ Derluguian, 209.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 211.

political representation and power as the seconds in command in the Republic—was just one stage in a much longer history of compromise and “getting along.”

After the collapse of Kabarda under the weight of Ermolov’s assault in the 1820s, the Balkars petitioned the Tsar and local Russian administrators for permission to resettle to and attain ownership of some of the Kabardian plains lands on which they depended for their winter transhumance. In requesting this land and contesting tributary relations with Kabardian landlords after the introduction of Russian rule, the Balkars wanted to assert their economic independence from the Kabardian feudal elite. The surviving Kabardian landlords used their influence in the Russian administration to prevent Balkar separation from happening and the Balkars remained locked in the mountain zone. By the late late-nineteenth century stability and compromise won out. The tsarist administration allowed some Balkar resettlement to the foothills and the Kabardians and Balkars had established a system of sharing the mountain pastures in the northwest corner of Nalchik District.

From 1918 through 1922, Balkar elites hoped to use the window of opportunity presented by the collapse of the tsarist state and the reconfiguration of Russia’s political and administrative-territorial structure to end their land dependence on Kabarda and ensure political independence from their larger Kabardian neighbor. These efforts at economic autarky and political autonomy foundered on the prospect of intractable land disputes and the specter of armed conflict. Compromise reigned during the formation of the Kabardino-Balkar AO in 1922. The Kabardian ruling elites recognized the Balkars’ rights, based on need, to additional foothills land in exchange for the preservation of the

territory of both peoples within a unitary (not federated) Kabardino-Balkaria. The Kabardian and Balkar elites reached a political compromise by which the region's main communities (Kabardians, Russians, and Balkars) would be accorded a mutually acceptable share of political power and influence in the republic. The top leadership position would always go to a Kabardian and the second most important position would go to a Balkar. It is interesting to note that, prior to perestroika,⁴⁰² the only time when a Kabardian was not in charge of the region as First Secretary of the Obkom was during the Balkars' exile. This may indicate that the formula for maintaining stable interethnic relations also ensured that the state paid closer attention to the implementation of Soviet nationalities policy in the Republic generally because the stakes (inter-communal peace and stability) were higher.

The brief collapse of Soviet power in Kabardino-Balkaria during World War Two was too short to have had a noticeable effect on Kabardino-Balkar relations. Besides, the *men* who would have likely led ethno-political mobilization on both sides were absent (they were at the front or otherwise engaged in the war effort). There are rumors that Balkar émigrés who left the Caucasus after the revolution came back to the region during the German occupation and attempted to break Balkaria away from Kabarda and form a united Karachai-Balkar Republic.⁴⁰³ These efforts made little headway.

⁴⁰² As part of the shakeup of cadres during perestroika, Gorbachev replaced the long-serving Mal'bakhov with a Russian outside, Evgenii Eliseev, as First Secretary of the Kabardino-Balkar Obkom. Eliseev ran the Republic for five years until succeeded by the Kabardian Valerii Kokov in early 1990.

⁴⁰³ "Chlenu Gosudarstvennogo Komiteta Oborny SSSR i Narodnomu Komissaru Vnutrennikh Del Soiuza SSR—General'nomu Komissaru Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnoti Tov. Beriia L.P.: Iz Spravka o sostoianii balkarskikh raionov Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR, 23 fevral'ia 1944 g.," 490.

The successful socio-economic reintegration of the Balkars after 1957, which was important in mitigating conflict during the 1990s, had less to do with Moscow's policies than with the fact that the local Kabardian and Russian populations were largely enthusiastic about the Balkars' return. The cooperation and support with which Kabardian, Russians and other local communities greeted the Balkars upon their return was a reflection of the long-standing symbiotic relationship that existed among Kabardino-Balkaria ethnic communities. The absence of the Balkars was detrimental to the economy of the Kabardian ASSR.⁴⁰⁴ The Republic's mountain zone was severely underutilized and its stockbreeding never recovered to its pre-war level in the Balkars' absence. Moreover, among the Balkars in exile were family members and friends of the Kabardians.

Finally, as this chapter demonstrates, the spirit of popular sovereignty and national rebirth that accompanied perestroika led the Balkar national elites to use the collapse of Soviet power in the early 1990s to end their people's continued participation in a Kabardian-dominated political system. The fact that democratic elections implied a loss of the number-two position in the Republic for a people composing just over ten percent of the population turned the Balkar elites' impulse toward sovereignty into full-scale nationalist mobilization. Again, compromise spared Kabardino-Balkaria from the inter-communal and nationalist conflict seen in other parts of the Caucasus.

⁴⁰⁴ For a discussion of the collapse of cattle breeding in the Kabardian ASSR after the depotation of the Balkars see TsDNI KBR 1/1/1203 (1945): 80

The long-term patterns of power sharing and symbiosis in the Kabardino-Balkar case were absent in the other cases of post-Soviet inter-communal tensions that this chapter has examined.

Compared with the Kabardino-Balkar case, the Karachai economy was historically less integrated with and interdependent on the economies of its neighbors' (Cossacks, Cherkes, and Abaza). The experience of 1922 to 1926, when constant conflict and disagreement among ethno-political blocs in Karachai-Cherkessia's administrative apparatus impeded decision-making and efficient governance, demonstrated the difficulties of maintaining a combined Karachai-Cherkes Autonomous Oblast. Anastas Mikoyan, head of the North Caucasus Regional Party Committee in the 1920s, highlighted the seemingly intractable problems that plagued the first Karachai-Cherkes Autonomous Oblast:

The composition of the [Karachai-Cherkes] oblast predetermined acute national struggle on every petty question and has largely paralyzed the constructive activity of Soviet power in the Karachai-Cherkes oblast. Especially in the first half of 1925, these relations reached such high levels of tension that all three national groups found it impossible to continue to reside together in a united oblast and expressed the necessity of dissolving the united oblast and creating two oblasts independent from each other—Karachai and Cherkes oblasts—and joining the Russian Cossack districts to Armavir District.⁴⁰⁵

On April 26, 1926, the VTsIK decreed the division of the Karachai-Cherkes Autonomous Oblast into separate Karachai and Cherkes autonomies.⁴⁰⁶ This division would last for over thirty years (thirteen of which the Karachai were in exile and enjoyed no autonomous status).

⁴⁰⁵ Quoted in Bugai, *Severnyi Kavkaz. Gosudarstvennoe stroitel'stvo*, 158-59.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.

The post-Soviet conflict over Prigorodnyi District was not simply a result of the failure to reestablish pre-deportation borders.⁴⁰⁷ Rather, it was the latest flare up in a long history of territorial disputes dating back to at least the mid-nineteenth century. The Ossetian-Ingush conflict over Prigorodnyi District has a long prehistory. At the end of the Russo-Caucasian Wars, in 1859 and 1860, the Russian administration decided to reinforce security along the most vulnerable part of the Georgian Military Highway by removing Ingush villages and establishing additional Cossack *stanitsy* around Vladikavkaz in the Tarsk valley and the upper-Sunzha and Kambileevka Rivers, the area now known as Prigorodnyi District. After Cossack colonization, this region was a flashpoint of tensions and sporadic conflict for Ossetian, Ingush, and Cossack communities, each of whom had competing claims to the region's dwindling land supply. During the Russian Revolution and Civil War, some of the most intense conflicts in the North Caucasus centered on the relationship between Cossacks, Ingush, and Ossetians, particularly in the territory of the future Prigorodnyi District. Indeed, the infamous cases of the deportation of Cossacks from the Terek region occurred precisely in this area. Three of the four Cossack *stanitsy* deported by pro-Soviet forces for the purposes of clearing land for Ingush and Chechen settlement in 1918 were located on the territory of the future Prigorodnyi District. Much like in Kabardino-Balkaria, the Soviet delimitation of ethno-territorial borders between North Ossetia and Ingush (after the collapse of the Mountaineer ASSR in 1924) was accompanied by ethno-national mobilization and

⁴⁰⁷ Tsutsiev, *Osetino-Ingushskii konflikt*, 28-79.

intense disputes over land. These disputes between Ossetians and Ingush focused particularly on Prigorodnyi District and the city of Vladikavkaz.

In the Chechen case, problems between Chechens and Russians had a long history and periods of peaceful coexistence were relatively far and few between. Similar to the Kabardian case, land incursions and disruptions of Chechen land-tenure practices caused by Cossack colonization along the Terek (and only later religious motivations) produced the first conflicts between Chechens and the Russian state already in the late-eighteenth century.⁴⁰⁸ The Chechens, however, continued to resist—first under Sheikh Mansur and, later, under Imam Shamil, their territory forming a vital part of the latter’s theocratic state—long after Ermolov’s armies had squelched the Kabardians’ resistance. But this difference between the Kabardian and Chechen experiences in the nineteenth century has more to do with differences in social structure, geography, and disease than with national mentalities, to say nothing of a supposed primordial proclivity to resist outside rule. Even after the final capture of Shamil in 1859, Chechens continued to come into conflict with Cossacks over land rights during the late-Imperial period and through the Russian Civil War.⁴⁰⁹

The tradition of excluding Chechens from the Republic’s industrial sector had been established well before the Chechens began their troubled return in 1957. During the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, another group of settlers with whom the Chechens would never establish friendly relations arrived in the Chechen lands. Russian

⁴⁰⁸ B.B. Zakriev, “K istorii rossiisko-chechenskikh otnoshenii poslednei treti XVIII veka,” in *Chechenskaia Respublika i chechentsy*, 254-61.

⁴⁰⁹ Arapov et al., 95-100, 113-23, 143-50.

workers began to settle the old-fortress of Groznaia in large numbers as it developed into the oil boomtown of Grozny and became an island of Russian proletarians in a sea of Chechen mountaineers.⁴¹⁰ In contrast to the Kabardino-Balkar capital of Nalchik, the Chechen capital Grozny, one of the oldest and largest industrial centers in the North Caucasus, had a history of Russian dominance and tensions with surrounding Chechen population. Indeed, during the first years of Soviet power in the 1920s, the Russian workers of Grozny refused to join the surrounding Chechen Autonomous Oblast, briefly winning recognition of their city as an autonomous administrative-territorial unit. Even at the height of Stalin's breakneck-paced industrialization and cultural revolution in the early 1930s few Chechens entered into their Oblast's industrial sector.⁴¹¹

Nalchik, by contrast, became a city shortly after the formation of the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Oblast in the early 1920s and its industrialization and infrastructural development occurred under the auspices of Soviet nationalities policies and as a capital of a national autonomy. Though initially dominated by Russians, by the 1960s, the modest industrial sector in and around Nalchik included significant numbers of Kabardians and Balkars.⁴¹²

Cultural Politics: From the Streets back to the Academy

On October 19, 2007, Ruben Oshroev and Timur Aloev, two young Kabardian historians traveled 170 miles from Nalchik to the city of Stavropol' to protest the doctoral

⁴¹⁰ Z.A. Zakhiraev, "Razvitie Groznenskogo neftenosnogo raiona v 1916-1921 godakh," in *Chechenskaia Respublika i chechentsy*, 288-92.

⁴¹¹ T.U. El'buzdukaeva, "Promyshlennoe razvitie Chechni v 20-30-e gody XX veka," in *ibid.*, 295-300.

⁴¹² V.K. Gardanov, *Kul'tura i byt narodov Severnogo Kavkaza (1917-1967 goda)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 76-86.

dissertation defense of Zarema Kipkeeva, a more senior historian of Karachai ethnicity.⁴¹³ Focusing on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ethno-demographic changes in the northwest Caucasus, Kipkeeva's dissertation, now published as the book *The North Caucasus in the Russian Empire: Peoples, Migrations, and Territories*, is a revisionist history of both the relations among the peoples of this region and their relations with Russia.⁴¹⁴ The intensity of emotion that led these young scholars to protest a dissertation defense is indicative of the way that, since the mid-1990s, inter-communal tensions between Kabardians and their Karachai-Balkar neighbors have moved from the streets and squares of Nalchik, Cherkessk and other cities to the hallowed halls of academia. Since the late-nineteenth century, historiography on Kabardian-mountaineer relations has demonstrated considerable variation and reflected the political contexts in which it was written. This final section explores the ethno-political implications of the interpretation of this relationship—a relationship that has occupied a central place in the first half of this dissertation—and discusses the close connections between history and ethnic politics in the post-Soviet North Caucasus.

Oshroev, Alov and other Circassian (Kabardian, Cherkess, and Adyghe)

intellectuals found Kipkeeva's research problematic on two grounds.⁴¹⁵ First, she presents the deadly, mid-nineteenth-century mass exodus of Circassians from the Caucasus to the

⁴¹³ A. Saburov, *Etnoistoriia: Mezhetnicheskaia i sotsial'naia napriazhennost' KBR (Obzor politiko-sotsial'nykh protsessov* (Nalchik: A. Saburov, 2011), 32.

⁴¹⁴ Kipkeeva, *Severnyi Kavkaz v Rossiiskoi Imperii*.

⁴¹⁵ See, for example, Alov and Oshroev's reviews of Kipkeeva's work. T. Kh. Alov, "Avtoreferat doktorskoi dissertatsii Z. B. Kipkeevoi: 'Narody Severo-Zapadnogo i Tsentral'nogo Kavkaza: migratsii i rasselenie v period ikh vkhozhdeniia v sostav Rossiiskoi imperii (60-e gody XVIII-60-e gody XIX v.)'" in *Etnopoliticheskie i religioznye problemy Kabardino-Balkarii: predposylki, kharakter i perspektivy resheniia* (Nalchik: koordinatsionnyi sovet adygskikh obshchestvennykh ob"edinenii KBR, 2011), 202-14 and R. G. Oshroev, "Tvoretz istorii Z. B. Kipkeeva O knige 'Narody Severo-Zapadnogo i Tsentral'nogo Kavkaza: migratsii i rasselenie (60-e gody XVIII- 60-3 gody XIX v.)'" in *ibid.*, 214-23.

Ottoman Empire as a voluntary emigration, rather than a state-sponsored genocide. The latter interpretation has become sacred truth for Circassians since their national rebirth of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the Circassian national movement places Russian recognition of the “genocide” as one of its primary objectives.⁴¹⁶ Second, Kipkeeva argues that the early-modern Circassian princely confederation of Kabarda occupied a much smaller territory than that which scholars traditionally ascribed to it. Kipkeeva extends this argument to a rejection of the widely held thesis that Kabarda’s vast land holdings allowed it to keep its neighbors in states of vassalage. Kipkeeva’s work is the latest reevaluation of the historic relationship between Kabardians of the central-Caucasian foothills and plains and their mountaineer neighbors. Since the late-nineteenth century, historiography on Kabardian-mountaineer relations has demonstrated considerable variation and reflected the political contexts in which it was written. This final section explores the ethno-political implications of the interpretation of this relationship—a relationship that has occupied a central place in the first half of this dissertation—and discusses the close connections between history and ethnic politics in the post-Soviet North Caucasus.

History has long been one of the chief tools employed by intellectuals in their efforts to forge national identities in an age of mass literacy and universal schooling; it is an essential element of “the invention of tradition.”⁴¹⁷ Since the early 1990s, intellectuals throughout the post-Soviet space have been involved in the reinvention of national histories in response to new forms of ethno-politics and the legitimating impulses of

⁴¹⁶ Zhemukhov, 505-09.

⁴¹⁷ Hobsbawm, Introduction to *The Invention of Tradition*.

newly independent nation-states. Even (or perhaps especially) where independence has not resulted from the Soviet collapse, for example in the North Caucasus, the (re)interpretation of history has undergirded strident ethno-nationalisms and attempts to ethnicize inter-communal tensions. While Caucasia's violent conflicts—from Nagorno-Karabakh to Chechnya—have attracted relatively significant attention in the West, the region's "silent conflicts"—those that have fortunately remained non-violent—have been largely ignored by academics and journalists alike.⁴¹⁸ These conflicts have often been waged on the pages of history books, ethno-nationalist journals and newspapers, and, most recently, on-line discussion forums, rather than on the region's rugged terrain. National elites have often looked to the region's hazy distant past as a means to articulate exclusivist ethno-national identities, facilitate nationalist mobilization, and justify contemporary claims to disputed territories.

In his 2006 book, *To Be Alans: Intellectuals and Politics in the North Caucasus*, anthropologist Victor Shnirel'man explores the competing ways in which Chechen, Ingush, Ossetian and Karachai-Balkar⁴¹⁹ intellectuals have explained the ethnogenesis, ancestry myths, and distant political history of their peoples in response to changes in political discourses and master narratives over the twentieth century.⁴²⁰ Shnirel'man demonstrates how, in the post-Soviet decades, ethno-national elites in the North Caucasus have increasingly employed history in their nation-building projects and territorial disputes with neighboring peoples. In particular, Shnirel'man's study focuses on

⁴¹⁸ Kazenin.

⁴¹⁹ The Karachai and Balkars, though counted as separate nationalities on the Russian census, now see themselves as one nation. They share a common language, culture, and myths. Therefore, I will refer to them as Karachai-Balkars.

⁴²⁰ Shnirel'man, *Byt' Alanami*.

competing historical claims to descent from the Alans—the once-powerful kingdom that controlled much of the central Caucasus and played a significant role in Eurasian politics in the early-medieval period before the Mongol invasions and the subsequent arrival of the Kabardians. Claims to the Alanian legacy have been a powerful mobilizational force among ethno-national movements of the North Caucasus. They have satisfied a desire for a glorious past among colonized communities whose historical memory has been dominated by narratives of victimhood. They have provided a legitimizing historical basis for resurgent national communities striving to prove their deep roots in the region. Finally, they have served as the basis for claims to territory controlled by neighboring communities.

In a similar manner, intellectuals have also significantly revised the more recent history of the peoples of the central Caucasus. Contemporary Karachai-Balkar historians have reinterpreted the relationship between the mountaineer communities and the princely confederation of Kabarda from the sixteenth century to the tsarist conquest of the central Caucasus in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Similar to the historiography on Alania, this revisionist turn is both a result and a cause of increased ethno-nationalist mobilization among and confrontation between Kabardians and their Karachai-Balkar neighbors.

Tsarist and Soviet Historiography on Kabarda and its Mountaineer Neighbors

After much delay, caused by shifts in Stalinist nationalities policy and the repression of ethnic communities during World War Two, the period from the mid-1950s through the

1960s witnessed a flowering of scholarship on the nationalities of the Soviet Union and those of the North Caucasus in particular.⁴²¹ This period saw the publication of national histories for each Autonomous Republic and Autonomous Oblast of the North Caucasus.⁴²² These studies offered official interpretations of historical debates concerning the social and political history of the North Caucasus and provided a master narrative on the historical development of the region that would last for the remainder of the Soviet period.

Classic iterations of the dominant ethno-class-based narrative of Kabarda's hegemony over its mountaineer neighbors based on Russian support and control of extensive territory and natural resources in the plains and foothills abound in the major histories of the peoples of the central Caucasus from the 1950s and 1960s. According to the 1959 *History of the North Ossetian ASSR*: "Kabarda...receive[d] military and other forms of support from Russia, which increased the former's influence on other mountaineer peoples...The Kabardian elite tried to selfishly benefit from their position. Kabardian princes began to regard all mountaineers living between Elbrus and Digoria as their slaves and those farther afield as their tributaries."⁴²³ In the *Survey of the History of Karachai-Cherkessia* from 1967 we read: "Of course the Kabardian feudal elite's

⁴²¹ Lowell Tillet, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969).

⁴²² S. K. Bushuev et al., *Ocherki istorii Adygei* (Maikop: Adygeiskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1957); Nevskaya et al., *Ocherki istorii Karachaevo-Cherkessii*; N. A. Smirnov et al., *Istoriia Kabardy s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk, 1957); A. V. Fadeev et al., *Ocherki istorii balkarskogo naroda (s drevneishikh vremen do 1917 goda)* (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1961); Kумыков et al. eds., *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR v 2-kh tomakh*; Bushuev et al., *Istoriia Severo-Osetinskoi ASSR*; *Ocherki Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei* (Grozny: Checheno-Ingushskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1967); Institut istorii, iazyka i literatury im. G. Tssadasy, *Ocherki istorii Dagestana* (Makhachkala: Dagestanskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1957).

⁴²³ Bushuev, *Istoriia Severo-Osetinskoi ASSR*, 105.

provision of pastures in the steppes and foothills districts [to the mountaineers] was by no means a selfless act. The acute need for plains pastures led to the establishment of feudal dependence of the mountaineers upon the lords of Kabarda.”⁴²⁴ In her classic 1963 political history of the North Caucasus, *The Peoples of the North Caucasus and their Connections with Russia*, Ekaterina Kusheva writes, “several neighboring tribes [sic] were dependent upon the Kabardian feudal lords: the Abaza, Balkars, Ossetians, and Ingush paid *iasak*—payment in kind [*natural’nyi obrok*]. The reason for this dependence...was the mountain dwellers’ need to use fall and winter pastures on the plains.”⁴²⁵ Finally, in terms of the territory controlled by Kabarda, in the 1967 History of the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR, V. K. Gardanov explains that “Kabarda...occupied a vast territory in the Terek River basin—approximately from the River Kuma in the west to the River Sunzha in the east...the Piatigor’e area was heavily...settled by Kabardians. Residents of Greater Kabarda grazed their cattle not only along the Kuma but also [farther west] along the upper Kuban.”⁴²⁶ According to this description, the territory controlled by Kabarda at its greatest extent stretched well into the current ethno-territorial borders of the Karachai, Ossetians, Ingush, and Chechens and the predominantly Russian region of Stavropol.

These views on Kabarda’s regional economic and political dominance and the extent of its territory were not new. From the second half of the eighteenth century, European travelers to the region described Kabarda in similar terms, noting that

⁴²⁴ Nevskaia, 239.

⁴²⁵ Kusheva, 121.

⁴²⁶ V. K. Gardanov, “*Ekonomicheskoe razvitie Kabardy i Balkarii v XVIII v.*” in *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR*, T. I, 132-33.

Kabarda's geographic location allowed its princes to economically dominate neighboring mountaineer communities. In his *Travels in Russia and Caucasia: 1770-1773*, the Baltic German naturalist-explorer, Johann Anton Güldenstädt, noted that "the Basian [Karachai-Balkar] districts paid tribute to various Kabardian princes: usually one sheep from each family annually... The Kabardians are more powerful [than the Karachai and Balkars], and the Basians drive their cattle on Kabardian land during the winter and therefore must submit to them."⁴²⁷ In his accounts of his travels in North Caucasia in 1793-1794, the famous St. Petersburg-based German botanist and zoologist Peter Simon Pallas described Kabarda's geographic dominance over the region's mountaineers:

the warlike nation of the Circassians [here Kabardians] inhabit principally the promontory of the Caucasus, and extend themselves to the adjacent beautiful plain, from which they have expelled the ancient inhabitants, and subjected the greater number to their dominion... The inhabitants of the mountains, such as the Abassines, Ossetines, Dugores, Bassianes, Balkares, Karashaies, and Karabulaks, whom the Circassian Princes have made tributary, give, in general, for each family, only one sheep, or its value in felts, felt cloaks, cloth, copper vessels, and the like.⁴²⁸

Finally, in his *Travels in the Caucasus and Georgia Performed in the Years 1807 and 1808 by Command of the Russian Government*, Julius von Klaproth similarly notes that the Karachai and Balkars "fell under the dominion of the Kabardians, to whom they are yet subject" and that "[t]hey are... under the authority of the two Kabardian princely houses of Kurgock and Kaituck, who exact a sheep every year by way of tribute from each family... In winter they drive their cattle into Kabarda to pasture, and are in

⁴²⁷ Güldenstädt, *Puteshestvie po kavkazu*, 225.

⁴²⁸ Peter Simon Pallas, *Travels Through the Southern Provinces of the Russian Empire in the Years 1793 and 1794* (London: Longman and Rees, 1802), 390, 403.

consequence dependent on the Tscherkessians [Kabardians]...’’⁴²⁹ After Russia’s final conquest of Kabarda by General Aleksei Ermolov in the 1820s, these descriptions formed the bases for treatments of Kabarda in subsequent histories of the region. The addition of Russian archival sources (Petr Butkov) and oral histories (Shora Nogmov and Khan-Gerei) from the mid-nineteen century on did not change this interpretation of Kabarda as *the* dominant power in the central Caucasus before the tsarist conquest.⁴³⁰

In the early-twentieth-century historical studies of the pre-colonial North Caucasus, scholars attributed even greater supremacy to Kabarda vis-à-vis its neighbors. This was primarily the work of Ossetian and Karachai-Balkar scholars from vastly different backgrounds. On the one hand, in the last years of tsarist power, liberal members of the Ossetian national elite, Alexander Kodzaev (1903) and Soslan “Vano” Temirkhanov (1913), published the first national histories of the Ossetian people.⁴³¹ Viewing feudal Kabarda as the chief impediment to Ossetia’s historical development, these works attribute an even more sinister historical role to Kabarda than previous accounts. According to Kodzaev:

The barbaric [Kabardian] people did not spare the religion of the conquered [Ossetian] people and pitilessly destroyed their shrines. From their vast peaceful domains where they had lived for thousands of years they were forced into the impenetrable slums of the mountains, where they were numerically and intellectually transformed into pitiful nonentities. Upon the internal life of the people they implanted a system that has hitherto delayed the peaceful process of the people’s development under the Orthodox Russian Tsar, who has given

⁴²⁹ von Klaproth, 281.

⁴³⁰ Butkov, *Materialy dlia novoi istorii Kavkaza*; Sh. B. Nogmov, *Istoriia adygeiskogo naroda, sostavlennaia po predaniiam kabardintsev* (Nalchik: Kabardinskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1947); Khan-Gerei, *Zapiski o Cherkesii* (Nalchik: El’-Fa, 2008).

⁴³¹ Aleksandr Kodzaev, *Drevnie Osetiny i Osetiia* (Vladikavkaz: Tipografiia R. Segal’ i S-v’ia, 1903), Temyrkhanty Soslan. *Iry Istori* (Vladikavkaz: Alanyston, 1994).

freedom to the long-suffering people from the horrible historical beast—the Kabardians.⁴³²

From the opposite end of the political spectrum, Umar Aliev, the pro-Bolshevik Karachai scholar, revolutionary, and local Party leader whom we encountered in chapter four, described Kabarda's historic relationship with its neighbors in a similar manner as his pro-tsarist political adversaries from Ossetia, minus the paeans to the progressive role of Russian colonialism. In *Karakhalk*, his 1927 Marxist historical survey of the peoples of the North Caucasus, Aliev argues that “the Kabardians...for centuries held the other mountaineer peoples in vassalage...[and] were at the higher, feudal, stage of historical development.”⁴³³ Aliev also highlights the role of land in the unequal relationship between Kabardians and neighboring mountaineer communities: “frequently subjugated through force of arms, the mountaineers often found themselves under Kabardian dominance because of insufficient pasturage in the mountains, which forced them to drive their flocks on the Kabardian plains.”⁴³⁴ Finally, Aliev distinguishes between degrees of dependence upon Kabarda among mountaineer communities: “The tyrannical power...of the Kabardian ‘pshi’ [princes] spread far beyond the borders of Kabarda...to other tribes. The more distant tribes—the Ingush, Karabulaks, Kists (Chechnya), Tagaurs, Kurtats, and Alagirs—were only tributaries of the Kabardian princes, whereas nearby tribes, such as the Karachai...and Balkars, were in positions of near slavery.”⁴³⁵

⁴³² Kodzaev, 104.

⁴³³ Umar Aliev, *Kara-Khalk* (“Karakhalk” - Chernyi narod); *ocherk istoricheskogo razvitiia gortsev Severnogo Kavkaza, i chuzhezemnogo vliianiia na nikh islama tsarizma, i pr.* (Rostov-on-Don: Krainatsizdat, 1927), 11.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 14.

What accounts for the increasingly anti-Kabardian tone of these early-twentieth-century histories? Such views had much to do with the North Caucasus's unresolved "land question": the lack of access to good land among mountaineer communities and the disparities in land holdings between relatively well-supplied Kabardians and Russians, on the one hand, and land-poor mountaineers on the other hand. That Kabardian communities had more land at their disposal than their mountaineer neighbors was a reflection of the last vestiges of princely Kabarda's former vastness. Far from being distributed equally among Kabarda's population, however, a relatively small stratum of Kabardian princes and nobles controlled much of this "Kabardian" land. As we have seen, the late-imperial and the early-Soviet periods, until Stalinist collectivization in 1928, witnessed numerous attempts by regional and central administrators to solve the land problem in the North Caucasus. These land reform efforts usually meant the intensified resettlement of mountaineers to the plains and the redistribution of land among and within these ethnic communities. In *Karachai*, Aliev's 1927 history of the Karachai people, published as the land reforms came to a close, he concludes that: "The attempt...to solve the mountaineers' land hunger only through the internal redistribution of the existing mountaineer land fund was doomed from the start. The Kabardians were the only ones whose land holdings were more or less sufficient, and they did not agree to the annexation of their national territory, because that would not look like a gain from the revolution, but rather the loss of what they had had before."⁴³⁶ Therefore, when local national intellectuals wrote on the land question and its intersection with inter-communal

⁴³⁶ Umar Aliev, *Karachai* (Rostov-on-Don: Krainatsizdat, 1927), 202.

relations, they were primarily writing for an audience of non-native members of educated society, particularly to administrators and governing elites. The authors of these works hoped that by presenting the mountaineers' land hunger as the result of Kabardian oppression, they could sway the opinion of those in power to conduct land reforms in favor of their peoples.

Anti-Kabardian rhetoric, especially from Karachai national elites, was part of the general ethnicization and breakdown of inter-communal relations that accompanied early Soviet land reforms and national border delimitation. However, official statements openly disparaging a fraternal Soviet people were politically dangerous given the recent emergence of proletarian internationalism as official state policy. In this political climate, most elites writing on Kabarda and the land question in north-the central Caucasus were careful to apply a class-based, Marxist analysis to their discussions of Caucasia's ethnically stratified socio-economic structure. They were quick to distinguish between the exploiting class of Kabardian princes and nobles and the Kabardian working peasantry (*trudovoe krest'ianstvo*). According to Aliev, "Kabardian princes, thanks to their large numbers and power, at one point controlled all of the North Caucasus; they always exploited the weak and numerically small Karachai people."⁴³⁷ The Karachai and Kabardians, however, were "brotherly neighboring peoples"⁴³⁸ and, according to Islam Khubiev-Karachailly, "the laboring Kabardian people never sympathized with the

⁴³⁷ GARF 1318/1/114 (1921): 106.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

[Kabardian feudal elites and bourgeoisie] because they caused them great economic hardship.”⁴³⁹

As head of the Karachai region during the conflict over Khasaut and the trans-Malka pastures in the early 1920s, Aliev also made risky official statements that could be interpreted as expressions of “bourgeois nationalism.” Recall Aliev’s claim that the population of Karachai “is unanimously hostile toward the Kabardians, who formerly oppressed and aggrieved them.”⁴⁴⁰ Most notable in this regard was Aliev’s December 1921 report to Moscow, “On the National Antagonism between Karachai and Kabarda and the Land Question,” in which he describes, in hyperbolic terms and without differentiating between feudal elites and serfs, centuries of Kabardian oppression of the mountaineer peoples, and especially the Karachai. It seems likely, as Artur Kazharov argues, that Aliev’s report played a significant role in his downfall as a political force in the region.⁴⁴¹ According to Kazharov, Aliev’s “thinly veiled nationalist sentiments, which did not accord with Bolshevik ideology...did not strengthen his authority in the eyes of representatives of central power[and]...as a result, he wound up outside the system of power in the...Autonomous Oblast that he helped create.”⁴⁴²

After the conclusion of the conflict-ridden process of border delimitation in the North Caucasus in the late 1920s, subsequent histories of interethnic relations and the land question in pre-tsarist north Caucasia were more in line with Soviet ideological

⁴³⁹ Khubiev-Karachaili, “Kabardino-Karachaevskii Vopros”, 1.

⁴⁴⁰ Quoted in A. G. Kazharov, “U. D. Aliev i nekotorye problemy natsional’no-gosudarstvennogo razvitiia narodov severnogo Kavkaza v nachale 1920 gg.” in *Istoricheskii vestnik Kabardino-Balkarskoi Respublikanskoi Instituta Gumanitarnykh Issledovaniï*, No. 9(2010): 76-90, 82.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 88.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 89.

standards: they were far less sensationalist and hyperbolic in their descriptions of the oppressive might of Kabarda; they specified that only the small stratum of Kabardian princes and nobles benefitted from the mountaineers' tribute payments; and they emphasized class over ethnicity in their analyses. These works were also based on a far closer reading of archival sources than the more politicized works of Kodzaev and Aliev.

By the 1930s, Georgii Kokiev, the prolific Ossetian historian of the North Caucasus, formulated what would become the standard Soviet interpretation of Kabarda's role in the pre-tsarist system of inter-communal relations in the central Caucasus. Based on the example of Kabardian-Ossetian relations, in 1938 Kokiev castigated earlier Ossetian "bourgeois nationalists" such as Kodzaev and Temirkhanov for "intentionally generalizing the question of Kabardian dominance in Ossetia" and "replacing class oppression with national oppression" in their analyses.⁴⁴³ Three interrelated ideas reflected in Kokiev's article deserve mention here, as they can be found in most subsequent Soviet work on Kabarda's relations with its mountaineer neighbors. First, Kokiev classifies the relationship between Kabarda's princes and the mountaineer communities as "feudal-vassal" or "suzerain-vassal dependence."⁴⁴⁴ This set a uniform definition of the pre-tsarist relationship between Kabarda and its neighbors. Second, Kokiev argues that this relationship was based more on class than ethnic affiliations. Ossetian feudal lords and their Kabardian suzerains both benefitted from this symbiotic, though unequal, relationship. According to Kokiev, "a close class-based union, existing between the Ossetian and Kabardian feudal lords, enabled both groups to exploit the

⁴⁴³ Kokiev, "Kabardino-Osetinskie otnosheniia," 153.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

Ossetian and Kabardian peasantries to the maximum.”⁴⁴⁵ Among his examples of this symbiosis, Kokiev argues that in exchange for tribute, Kabardian princes provided military aid to their “vassals,” who were mountaineer nobles, enabling them to maintain their dominance over their serfs. At the same time, Kabarda’s Ossetian “vassals” were obliged, when necessary, to provide military aid during frequent Crimean raids on Kabarda.⁴⁴⁶ Third, Kokiev argues that the mountaineer (in this case, Ossetian) peasantry faced “double oppression” (*dvoinei gnet*) from the Kabardian princes and their own indigenous nobles.⁴⁴⁷

Much of the historical scholarship on interethnic relations in the central Caucasus published from the late 1950s and 1960s reflected Kokiev’s ideas of “suzerain-vassal dependence,” “a class-based union of elites,” and “double oppression.” The publication of national histories of the peoples of the North Caucasus for popular consumption during this period exposed the wider public—for the first time, given the recent rise of mass literacy—in the national republics and oblasts of the region to these ideas. The ideas contained within these histories, carefully tailored to the prerogatives of Soviet nationality policies, played important roles in the construction of national identities in the late-Soviet period.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 176.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 160.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 156.

Post-Soviet Historical Revisionism

The ethno-national resurgence in the post-Soviet North Caucasus has witnessed widespread revision of national histories. This revisionism was the product of the growth of national consciousness among the peoples of the North Caucasus and part of attempts to use history as a means of national consolidation. Similar to the situation in the early twentieth century, the breakdown of inter-communal relations in the North Caucasus around the turn of the new millennium saw ethno-political elites turn to history and historians turn to ethno-politics. Researchers have noted the ways in which national elites have (re)interpreted the history of the Kingdom of Alania to provide support for the goals and interests of their movements.⁴⁴⁸ However, post-Soviet revisionist historiography on Kabarda and its relations with its neighboring ethnic communities remains relatively unexplored.

In the post-Soviet decades, Karachai-Balkar historians have minimized the historical extent and influence of Kabardian princely power in the region. This is a reversal of the early-twentieth-century situation when Karachai-Balkar and Ossetian historians emphasized the oppression of Kabarda's princes or, sometimes, Kabardians generally. The overarching goal of this revisionist scholarship has been the rejection of the "suzerain-vassal" paradigm in favor of the idea that mountaineers were merely "under Kabardian protection" (*pod protektoratom Kabardy*) and that the pre-colonial central Caucasus was a "confederation" of mountaineer and plains communities.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁸ See for example Shnirel'man.

⁴⁴⁹ Begeulov, 37, 57.

The works of Rashid Khatuev and Rustam Begeulov exemplify the four interrelated tenets of this central-Caucasus-confederation paradigm.⁴⁵⁰ First, these authors emphasize that, with the possible exception of a few Digora-Ossetian and Abaza communities, the mountaineer societies were not territorially part of Kabarda. Far from being the victims of the type of arbitrary Kabardian demands described by Umar Aliev in the 1920s (for example, giving up their wives and daughters to the whims debauched Kabardian princes), the mountaineers were the masters of their valleys. Second, the payment of tribute to Kabarda's princes did not make mountaineers Kabardian vassals. Rather, the rendering of tribute meant that mountaineer communities were under Kabardian protection. In exchange for their payments, mountaineers received protection from cattle thieves while they used Kabarda's plains pasture lands in the winter; they also received protection from external threats (Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars, Nogais). According to these historians, Kabardian protection did not entail any limitations on these societies' foreign or domestic policies. Begeulov argues that "an analysis of the sources...allows us to claim that the so-called 'ethno-political formations dependent upon the Kabardian social elite' enjoyed...complete independence in the spheres of internal autonomy, socio-political life, and even in foreign policy."⁴⁵¹ Third, the Kabardian protection was not permanent but could be and was successfully contested by forming strategic alliances with Kabarda's enemies or taking advantage of moments of internal weakness within Kabarda. Fourth, these scholars place great emphasis on the mutual benefits derived from

⁴⁵⁰ Rashid Khatuev and R. S. Tebuev, *Ocherki istorii karachaevo-balkartsev* (Moscow: Ilekse, 2002); Khatuev, "Karachai i Balkariia do vtoroi poloviny XIX," 5-176; and Begeulov.

⁴⁵¹ Begeulov, 23.

this relationship. This provides the basis for these authors to refer to the system of inter-communal relations in the central Caucasus as a confederation of mountain and plains societies. Khatuev summarizes these revisions to the historical narrative of Kabardian-mountaineer relations: “each of the mountaineer societies that entered into the union with Kabarda: a) preserved its territorial separation from Kabarda, b) preserved its independent internal administration, c) conducted an independent foreign policy, and d) could voluntarily leave the union.”⁴⁵²

Among professional historians of the North Caucasus, Zarema Kipkeeva, a Karachai historian of migratory processes in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century northwest Caucasus, has more recently offered the most thoroughgoing revisions to the Soviet-era narratives of Kabarda’s dominance over its neighbors.⁴⁵³ As the Kabardian opposition to her doctoral dissertation defense demonstrates, Kipkeeva’s revisionism has drawn the ire of at least some historians in the region. Kipkeeva rejects the commonly held thesis that since the sixteenth century, the lack of good land among the peoples of the central Caucasus led them into states of vassalage vis-à-vis the princes of Kabarda. In her discussion of Kabarda, Kipkeeva focuses on migrations and inter-communal relations along its western and northwest frontiers. Kipkeeva argues for an abbreviated understanding of Kabarda’s borders in this region and a reassessment of the nature, extent, and causes of Kabardian influence among the peoples of this region (the Karachai, Balkars, and Abaza).

⁴⁵² Khatuev, “Karachai i Balkariia do vtoroi poloviny XIX v.,” 86.

⁴⁵³ See Kipkeeva, *Severnyi Kavkaz v Rossiiskoi imperii*; and idem., *Narody Severo-Zapadnogo i Tsentral'nogo Kavkaza: migratsii i rasselenie. 60-e gody XVIII v. 0 60-e gody XIX* (Moscow: Izd-vo Ippolitova, 2006).

The crux of Kipkeeva's argument is that in the mid-eighteenth century, the Russian colonial administration backed Kabarda's claims over its neighbors in the region and facilitated the establishment of Kabardian dominance over mountaineer communities for the purposes of colonial expansion. According to Kipkeeva, "Russia 'strengthened' Kabarda out of self-interest, in order to secure a springboard for further expansion to the Black Sea" and as a way to bring "the *independent* Karachai, Balkar, Ossetian, Ingush, Chechen and other peoples of the North Caucasus mountains to its side." Russia's plan was "to incorporate these numerically small peoples into Russia along with Kabarda by declaring them part of Kabarda or, even better, one and indivisible with Kabarda."⁴⁵⁴ Thus, for Kipkeeva, Kabardian dominance over the mountaineers was a fiction created by the tsarist state for expansionist purposes.

Given the plethora of sources attesting to the tributary relations between Kabarda and its eastern Ossetian and Ingush neighbors in the eighteenth century, Kipkeeva is not able to debunk this relationship. In regard to these peoples, Kipkeeva is contented with demonstrating how the Russian administration bolstered Kabarda's claims over these peoples prior to Russia's annexation of Kabarda during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768-1774. However, upon securing its claims to Kabarda and its "tributaries" (*danniki*) through the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, Russia quickly set about curtailing Kabardian influence over its eastern neighbors through the resettlement of mountaineers from the mountains to the foothills and plains of eastern (Lesser) Kabarda.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ Kipkeeva, *Severnyi Kavkaz v Rossiiskoi imperii*, 24.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 84-94.

Kipkeeva is most concerned with demonstrating that before Russia's interference on behalf of Kabarda in the late-eighteenth century, Kabarda's territory and influence did not extend beyond the upper Malka River in the west and northwest, to the regions inhabited by Karachai, Abaza, and (sporadically) Nogais. To cite one example of this revision of Kabarda's historic borders, Kipkeeva argues against the widespread belief that Beshtau/Piatigor'e, Russia's famous mineral-spring resort district just to the northwest of current Kabardian borders, was once an integral part of Kabarda. For Kipkeeva, this belief is the result of a classic example of "the Russian Empire expanding Kabarda's territory...to expand its own territory."⁴⁵⁶ Kipkeeva demonstrates that during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768-1774, when "Kabarda became part of the Russian Empire," Russia sent its forces into this Crimean-Ottoman held region to return Kabardian subjects who had switched sides and fled beyond the Russian frontier two years earlier. Kipkeeva argues that Russian policymakers viewed this military action as a perfect pretext for the annexation of this strategic region, and, immediately after Russian forces occupied Piatigor'e in early August 1769, "the Russian College of Foreign Affairs issued a memorandum 'for publication in newspapers' stating that 'the Beshtau mountains are in the domain of the Kabardian Circassians.' Thus, although the Kabardians themselves were removed from Beshtau/Piatigor'e after residing there for only two years, this district was officially listed as part of Kabarda."⁴⁵⁷ Far from being historic Kabardian territory, Kipkeeva argues that "before the Russo-Turkish War...there were no Kabardian villages in the vicinity of Piatigor'e," rather, "there were Karachai villages in Piatigor'e."

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

According to Kipkeeva, “the removal of the Karachai from the foothills of Piatigor’e began only in the period of the Russo-Turkish War...in connection with the military-resettlement policy of a Russian government trying to enlarge Kabarda.”⁴⁵⁸

In the aggregate, Kipkeeva’s interpretations of ethno-territorial borders, inter-communal relations, and migratory processes in the northwest Caucasus are part of a larger Karachai-Balkar historico-political agenda. Kipkeeva tries to demonstrate that, contrary to standard histories, the Karachai and Balkars were independent of Kabarda, the Crimean Khanate, and the Ottoman Empire until they peacefully entered the Russian Empire in the 1820s.

New Narratives for New Politics

What accounts for the differences in historical interpretations between early-twentieth-century mountaineer scholars, like Aliev and Kodzaev, who depict the mountaineers as the near slaves of the Kabardians, and contemporary scholars like Begeulov and Kipkeeva, who view the political ties between Kabarda and its neighbors either as a confederacy of equals or as non-existent? An examination of the politicization of history in the North Caucasus provides some answers to this question. Early twentieth-century authors wrote in a very different political context, and to a very different audience, than those of the post-Soviet period. The land question was one of the most important issues in the politics of the North Caucasus in the late-imperial and early Soviet periods. Given this political context, native scholars during these earlier periods, writing to an almost

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 39.

exclusively non-native audience of administrators, policymakers and officials, hoped to influence central state policies through their writings. Thus, in regard to the land question, it was advantageous for mountaineer elites to portray their land-hungry peoples as loyal subjects/citizens—in terms of religion and service in the tsarist period and in terms of class in the Soviet period—who had been historically oppressed and deprived of much-needed land by Kabardians. However, in the post-Soviet period, given the ascendancy of ethnic nationalism and the rejection of tsarist and Soviet resettlement and border-delimitation policies as examples of “divide-and-rule” imperialism, claims to indigenous status and historic claims to lands became new weapons in what were often old territorial disputes. Thus, Kabardian oppression was no longer a useful justification for land redistribution and border revision. More than this, however, native scholars were now also writing to a native audience with (consciously or not) a different set of goals in mind.

While the land question still exists in the North Caucasus, during the ethno-political resurgence of the post-Soviet period, national-cultural rebirth and the reclamation of a colonized past became more important issues for many politically active scholars in the region. For others, as we have seen, the land question was indelibly linked to larger ethno-historical questions. Taking seriously their national sovereignty, the peoples of the North Caucasus sought historical precedents of “national” independence to justify their current national existence; the grander and more ancient the precedent the better. Karachai-Balkars, Ossetians, Chechens and Ingush met this need by offering completing claims to the Alanian legacy. Moreover, many of these groups mobilized the

Alanian legacy to support their claims to disputed territories. According to the warped logic of ethno-politics, the true descendants of the Alans had the right to claim most of the central Caucasus as their people's historic territory. For example, the fiercest territorial dispute in the post-Soviet North Caucasus—that between the Ossetians and the Ingush—has seen the most famous examples of the appropriation of the Alanian past: North Ossetia added “Alania” to its official appellation and Ingushetia named its new capital “Magas” after ancient Alania's capital. Meanwhile, in a similar manner, Circassians (the Adyghe, Cherkess, and Kabardians) have also exhibited a renewed interest in their ancient past, which they trace back farther than the Alans, but to the eastern Black Sea littoral rather than the central Caucasus. Indeed, *Khatti*, currently the most popular Kabardian dance troupe in the Caucasus, is named after the ancient Hattians, residents of Anatolia in the second millennium BCE who some Circassian scholars have somewhat tendentiously claimed as the progenitors of their peoples.

Circassians, however, do not need to look as far back as their neighbors for evidence of a glorious history of statehood in Caucasia. Whatever the extent of its control over the peoples of the central Caucasus, Kabarda was undoubtedly one of the strongest and strategically significant polities in the Caucasus between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus, a revival of Circassian traditions and a glorification of *Kabardian*-Circassian history of this period have played large roles in the Circassian national movement in the post-Soviet era.⁴⁵⁹ Some Circassian activists, however, not satisfied with the example of historic statehood represented by Kabarda, have propagated the idea

⁴⁵⁹ For an example of the renewed interest in the culture and traditions of Kabarda see S. Kh. Khotko, *Tsivilizatsiia Kabardy* (Sankt-Peterburg: Izd-vo S.-Peterburgskogo un-ta, 2008).

of a “Great Circassia” as a historical reality. The invention of Circassia as a historic nation has yielded the publication “historical” maps that combine all of the Circassian cultural-linguistic communities, from the Shapsugs in the west to Kabardians in the east, at their greatest territorial extents, into a single confederated Circassian state.⁴⁶⁰ The invention of historic Circassia is a function of current efforts on the part of many Circassian national activists to create a unified Circassian national republic within the Russian Federation.⁴⁶¹

Unsurprisingly, the Circassians’ neighbors in the North Caucasus, particularly the Karachai-Balkar people, have reacted negatively both to attempts to create a greater Circassian ethno-territorial unit, because its borders would include land claimed by Karachai-Balkars, and to the historiographical glorification of Kabarda and/or Circassia, because it minimizes and deemphasizes the Karachai-Balkars and their territory.⁴⁶² There is a sense among Karachai-Balkars that historiography on the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries is dominated by Kabardino-Circassian interpretations—interpretations which ignore the important contributions of the Karachai-Balkars and relegate the mountaineers, especially the Karachai-Balkars, to the position of vassals of Kabarda of little consequence to the geo-politics of the region until the Russian conquest. Thus, recent revisionist Karachai-Balkar historiography, which often depicts a much weaker and more fractured Kabarda than standard Soviet-era narratives would have us

⁴⁶⁰ The Karachai-Balkar nationalist-cum-historian, Mukhammed Budai, whose writings on the ethno-genesis of Karachai-Balkars are notorious for their tendentiousness, does provide a concise summary of the ways in which some Circassian scholars have sought to foster the “myth” of a “Great Circassia.” See Budai’s *Mifo “Velikoi Cherkessii”*, <http://real-alania.narod.ru/alanialand/B1/2b/0bud.htm> (June 2005).

⁴⁶¹ Zhemukhov, “Birth of Modern Circassian Nationalism”.

⁴⁶² See Budai, “Mifo ‘Velikoi Cherkessii’.”

believe, is, in part, a response to this perception of historiographical ignoring and diminishment; it is an attempt to reclaim and rewrite their people's history in grander, more positive, light; it is the Kabardian analogy to the Karachai-Balkar claims to the Alanian legacy.

Finally, recent Karachai-Balkar ethno-political historiography on the northwest and central Caucasus during this period should also be understood in the context of another aspect of the socio-political history of the region since World War Two: the continuing vilification, real or perceived, of the region's "punished peoples" for their purported mass treason during the war. The Soviet state did not fully help these peoples shed the stigma of being labeled "traitors of the homeland." In some cases, the local authorities openly propagated information about their mass collaboration. Despite efforts to highlight the valorous service to the Soviet war effort of many Karachai, Balkars, Ingush and Chechens, official and semi-official statements in textbooks, memorials, newspapers, and speeches, have periodically reminded the Russian public of the purported treachery of these communities.⁴⁶³ Given this history, it is reasonable to also view Karachai-Balkar revisionist histories, especially the work of Kipkeeva, as attempts at redeeming the Karachai-Balkars as loyal Russian subjects/citizens. For example, Kipkeeva emphasizes that Karachai-Balkars were rarely party to the anti-Russian resistance movements of the Caucasian Wars and that, after their peaceful incorporation into the Russian Empire in the 1820s, they remained peaceful and loyal Russian subjects. On the other hand, Kipkeeva uses tsarist sources to depict Kabardians as "predators"

⁴⁶³ Shnirel'man, 360-88.

(*khishchniki*) and “brigands” (*razboiniki*) who could not be trusted by the tsarist administration.⁴⁶⁴

History has become a platform for ethno-national competition and conflict in the North Caucasus. Just how intense this competition has become is borne out by Oshroev and Alov’s protesting of Kipkeeva’s dissertation defense and more generally by the vitriolic rhetoric surrounding historical disputes on Karachai-Balkar and Circassian blogs and Caucasus internet discussion boards.⁴⁶⁵ While the ethno-politicization of history has been symptomatic of identity politics throughout the post-Soviet space, in two republics of the central Caucasus—Karachai-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria—ethnic politics have not descended into inter-communal violence but has largely been confined to the pages of history books, journals, and newspapers. Indeed, compared with the ethno-nationalist mass mobilization of the early 1990s, this turn to cultural politics represented a de-escalation of, and perhaps a safety valve for, conflict in Kabardino-Balkaria and neighboring regions. Based on my own experiences and observations, on an everyday level, relations between Circassians and Karachai-Balkars in the central Caucasus remain relatively stable. Interethnic marriages are not uncommon and friendships, business partnerships, and scholarly collaborations often cut across ethnic lines. In Kabardino-Balkaria, much of the ethno-nationalist tension that seems so characteristic of the Caucasus remains a feature of elite-level politics rather than everyday of life.

⁴⁶⁴ Kipkeeva, *Severnyi Kavkaz v Rossiiskoi imperii*, 111.

⁴⁶⁵ For examples, see the discussion boards on the following websites: for Circassian views see <http://www.aheku.org> and <http://www.elot.ru>; for Karachai-Balkar views, see for example, <http://www.elbrusoid.ru> and <http://real-alania.narod.ru/>; for general Caucasus discussion boards, where representatives of both sides often debate their views see, for example, www.kavkazweb.net and www.kavkaz-uzel.ru.

Conclusions

In the early autumn of 2008, the ethno-historical debates between Kabardian/Circassian and Karachai-Balkar scholars-cum-national activists led to mass ethno-political mobilization with the possibility escalation into violence. On September 15, 2008, residents of the Balkar village of Këndelen blocked the passage through their village of a horseback procession of Kabardian national activists in traditional folk costumes. This ceremonial procession, sponsored by Arsen Konokov, the second President of Kabardino-Balkaria, was part of the commemoration of the three-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Mount Kanzhal.⁴⁶⁶ According to the official interpretations of the Kabardino-Balkar government and the Russian Academy of Sciences, in 1708, after the Kabardians refused the Crimean Khan's demands for tribute, the Kabardian prince Kurgoko Atazhukin valiantly led a grossly outnumbered Kabardian army in a night-time battle against the Turkish and Crimean Tatar forces of Khan Kaplan Girey. According to legend, Kabardians forced the Crimean army to flee its encampment on the trans-Malka pastures near Mount Kanzhal by driving in 300 mules with burning hay strapped to their backs. In the ensuing panic about 7,000 Kabardian horsemen stormed the Crimean forces, inflicting great losses. The remnants of the Crimean Khan's army retreated across the Kuban.⁴⁶⁷ The Battle of Mount Kanzhal remained an important component of Kabardian folklore,⁴⁶⁸ but there was little documentary evidence to confirm that such a battle ever

⁴⁶⁶ Kazenin, 99-102.

⁴⁶⁷ For the official interpretation, see the recent survey history of Kabardino-Balkaria: Unezhev, 147-51.

⁴⁶⁸ In his 1847 classic *Istoriia adykheiskogo naroda*, which is almost exclusively based on oral histories, Shora Nogmov, the first Kabardian historian, glorifies the Kabardian victory in the Battle of Mount Kanzhal. Sh.B. Nogmov, *Istoriia adykheiskogo naroda, sostavlennaiia po predaniiam kabardintsev* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1994), 146-47.

took place. Recently, however, Kabardian historians began to write anew about the battle after discovering several textual sources confirming the legend.⁴⁶⁹

In the post-Soviet period, Kabardian national activists have focused most of their historical commemorations on the tragic results of the Circassians' conflict with the Russian state. Given the negative historical role of the Russian state in these types of commemorations, Kabardino-Balkaria's pro-Kremlin leaders have had to moderate their levels of support for such activities.⁴⁷⁰ In 2008, the leadership of Kabardino-Balkaria seized upon the three-hundredth anniversary of this battle as a means of promoting a type of Kabardian patriotism that did not conflict with the larger Russian national project because the Crimean Khanate was a common enemy of both Russia and Kabarda. The official interpretation of the Kabardian victory over the Crimean Khan's armies was that it allowed for closer relations between Kabarda and Russia. Balkar elites interpreted the official glorification of the Battle of Mount Kanzhal as another example of the embellishment of Kabardian history and the exaggeration of the power and importance of Kabarda in the history of the North Caucasus. The fact that the battle occurred near Mount Elbrus, one of the symbols of the Karachai-Balkar nation, further upset Balkar elites. In 2008, following a government-sponsored conference and numerous official publications on the Battle of Mount Kanzhal,⁴⁷¹ a group of oppositional Karachai-Balkar scholars, published *The Myth of the Battle of Mount Kanzhal*, a refutation of the scope

⁴⁶⁹ See, for example, B.Kh. Bgazhnokov ed., *Kanzhal'skaia bitva i politicheskaia istoriia Kabardy pervoi poloviny XVIII veka: issledovaniia i materialy* (Nalchik: Izd. M. i V. Kotliarovykh, 2008).

⁴⁷⁰ Zhemukhov, 503-24.

⁴⁷¹ B.Kh. Bgazhnokov, "Istoricheskoe znachenie Kanzhal'skoi bitvy," in *Kanzhalskaia bitva*, 9-50.

and significance of the Battle of Mount Kanzhal.⁴⁷² This counter-commemoration campaign of the Karachai-Balkar elites found wide resonance among ordinary Balkars, culminating in the standoff outside Këndelen.

Happily, the confrontation outside of Këndelen ended peacefully. After two days of tensions, during which Republican authorities attempted to break up the road block, the Kabardian horsemen ultimately decided to bypass the village and continue their commemorative procession via another route.⁴⁷³

The Këndelen affair of 2008 is emblematic of ethno-politics in post-Soviet Kabardino-Balkaria where tensions are never far from the surface but actual violence is rare. Indeed, there is near-constant struggle in the ethno-cultural sphere between nationalist scholars (joined by armies of pseudo-scholars) over historical narratives. These incessant intellectual disputes represent a de-escalation of the type of mass ethno-political mobilization among Kabardians and Balkars witnessed during the early 1990s. The Këndelen affair shows the capacity of these interethnic disputes to move from the academy and the internet back to the streets. However, the non-violent resolution, through compromise, of this standoff is also indicative of the ultimately peaceful relations that have prevailed between Kabardians and Balkars in the post-Soviet period. As we have seen, given the absence of significant socio-economic differences and the reconfiguration of political power-sharing, ethno-political tensions between Kabardians and Balkars, while no means absent, have stabilized since the mid-1990s. In terms of

⁴⁷² S.P. Kermenchiev and M.L. Golemba, *Mifo kanzhal'skoi bitve* (Piatigorsk: S. Kermenchiev and M. Golemba, 2008).

⁴⁷³ Kazenin, 100.

Rogers Brubaker's "everyday ethnicity," elite-level ethno-political contention in Kabardino-Balkaria has usually met, and will likely continue to meet, with popular indifference because the everyday concerns of ordinary Kabardians and Balkars are "only occasionally and intermittently interpreted in ethnic terms."⁴⁷⁴ As long as the social structure of Kabardino-Balkaria is not stratified according to ethnicity and Balkars continue to enjoy an acceptable level of political power in the Republic, ethno-political elites will not be able to sustain mass mobilizations based on inter-communal contention. Indeed, as this chapter demonstrates, the triumph of the long-standing tradition of political compromise between Kabardian and Balkar elites and the continued absence of an ethnically stratified social structure played a significant role in making Kabardino-Balkaria's post-Soviet experience more stable and peaceful than those of its neighbors.

⁴⁷⁴ Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, 168.

Conclusion

The recent historical discourse on Kabardino-Balkaria is marked by two extremes that reflect the region's transitory post-Soviet political status somewhere between the colonial and post-colonial. On the one hand, official historiography and commemorative discourses unproblematically and ahistorically treat Kabardino-Balkaria as a place that existed for centuries before its creation in 1922.¹ That is, by imposing the modern borders of Kabardino-Balkaria backward onto the vast expanse of history when they did not exist, histories of Kabardino-Balkaria from ancient times to the present (to paraphrase the title of a Soviet classic),² naturalize and legitimize the existence of the modern ethno-territorial unit. On the other hand, local Kabardian and Balkar nationalists, opposed to the existence of Kabardino-Balkaria in its present form and rejecting by definition the constructivist theory of nations, argue that Kabardino-Balkaria is an artificial product of Russia's divide-and-rule policies in the Caucasus. Yet their preferred objects of study—Great Circassia and Karachai-Balkaria—are no less ahistorical and based on contemporary ethno-political projects than that of Kabardino-Balkaria.³ Far from being the product of Russian policies of divide-and-rule or, alternatively, an ancient entity, in this study I have tried use a “situational analysis” to demonstrate how Kabardino-

¹ See, for example, the official high-school history textbook approved by the Kabardino-Balkar Ministry of Culture and edited by a duo of the most senior Kabardian and Balkar historians in the republic. T. Kh. Kumykov and I.M. Miziev eds., *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarii* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 1997).

² Kumykov ed, *Istoriia Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR*.

³ For the historical narrative of the Karachai-Balkar opposition see the website of the organization “Alan” <http://real-alania.narod.ru/>; For the pan-Circassian narrative see <http://www.aheku.org/>

Balkaria (and “Kabardians” and “Balkars”) formed out of dynamic interactions among the tsarist/Soviet state, the local societies of the central Caucasus and the space they inhabited.⁴

In examining inter-communal relations in the central Caucasus, this study has found that at the core of the enduring, if sometimes troubled, union between Kabardians and Balkars is the symbiotic, though politically and socially unequal, relationship that has linked these two peoples together since the sixteenth century. The Kabardian-Balkar symbiosis in the modern period emerged out of a system of inter-communal relations that connected all of central Caucasia’s mountaineer communities to Kabarda as a result of the Kabardian elites’ control of the region’s plains pastures and farmland. Because the Greater Kabardian heartland largely separated the Balkar societies’ mountain valleys from the outside world, this symbiosis endured, in continuously evolving forms, long after tsarist conquest and disease destroyed the Kabarda-centered system of inter-communal relations.

Until the social transformations of the early Soviet period, class or estate categories and confessional affiliations, the latter transcending class and community, held this symbiosis together and had greater meaning in society than ethnic or national ones. Horizontal ties among the region’s elites, though undergoing dramatic changes under tsarist rule, lasted through 1917. For example, as we have seen in the case of Lesken, Ossetian Muslims, particularly from elite social strata, remained connected to Kabardian

⁴ On situational analysis see Miller, “Between Local and Inter-Imperial.”

communities, through familial relations, religious ties, and land-use patterns, long after Kabarda's formal tributary dominance over Ossetian communities had ended.

This dissertation has examined the expansion and evolution of imperial rule and governance over more than two centuries. As was the case throughout its imperium, the Russian state created as much it destroyed.⁵ In transforming the societies of the central Caucasus—through ethnic cleansing, resettlement, ethicizing borders and territories, educational and missionary activity, and manipulating local politics—Russia brought some communities closer together, while gradually separating others and, in promoting colonization of the region by Russian and European peasants, created new types of interactions and exchanges. As we have seen in Russia's security dilemma in the region, the new interactions that the state created in acting as a "bureaucrat-policeman" in pursuit of security and order were often unintended and unwelcome. In some areas these imperial transformations created long-standing animosities and tensions. For example, Cossack colonization and the attendant resettlement of Ossetians and Ingush, created long-standing inter-communal tensions. These tensions have sporadically erupted into violent conflict among Ossetians, Ingush, and Cossacks. In other cases, the consequences of imperial rule were more benign. For example, imperial rule reinforced the symbiotic interdependence between Kabardians and Balkars, by linking the two communities administratively and economically through land reforms. In most cases, at least through the late-1920s, the ways in which state policies affected land relations determined much about the larger implications of Russian imperial rule. Crucially, Russian colonization

⁵ On the imperium as "creative space" see Breyfogle, 52.

never upset the delicate demographic balance on which stable land relations depended within and between Kabarda and the Balkar mountaineer societies.

One of the most important social transformations wrought by the imperial state was the creation of “Kabardians” and “Balkars” as national communities. This process of “nation building” began already in the tsarist period with the introduction of ethnic categories for the administration of the region’s diverse communities. After 1917, the Bolsheviks’ class warfare combined with their institutionalization and territorialization of ethnicity sapped class and estate categories of their significance and gave ethnic and national categories unprecedented meaning in society. Soviet policies of nativization, which began in the 1920s and continued throughout the Soviet period and linked social mobility to nationality and territory, steadily increased the importance of national categories. The Stalinist deportation of nationalities from the North Caucasus during World War Two, which subjected communities to state violence on the basis of national affiliations, further consolidated ethnic consciousness and reinforced the importance of national categories among the deported communities.

Finally, this dissertation has examined the causes of inter-communal peace and conflict in Kabardino-Balkaria and the North Caucasus more broadly. It finds that state policies were often the cause of inter-communal conflict. Over the course of the tsarist and Soviet periods, state policies aimed at achieving both ideological and security goals often produced inter-communal conflict. Population politics of resettlement and deportation disrupted historic land-use and ownership regimes and, by shifting demographic balances, disrupted inter-communal symbioses and led to violence in the

North Caucasus. In contrast to communities in other parts of the region, however, Kabardian and Balkar communities, given their demographic patterns, did *not* experience the same acute land pressures as a result of Russian colonization. Kabardian and Balkar communities were able to adapt their symbiotic economic system to include Cossacks, Russian peasants, and other colonial settler communities. In contrast, the imposition of national categories onto the peoples of the region and the delimitation of ethno-national borders demonstrates how the state's ideological projects also exacerbated inter-communal conflicts. For example, from 1918 to 1926, the Bolsheviks' class warfare and introduction of the national principle led to the ethnicization of inter-communal conflict in the central Caucasus. The national principle and its instrumentalization by local elites exacerbated tensions by turning feuds between villages over land allotments into conflicts between nations over their national territories.

In addition to the state's role as an unwitting creator of inter-communal conflict, this dissertation has also found that the state played a crucial role as a referee or mediator of disputes between Kabardians and Balkars (as it did among a host of other groups in conflict during revolutionary periods). As was often the case, the state steered disputing parties toward a resolution that was most favorable to its policy goals.⁶ During periods of state collapse and reconfiguration in the late-eighteenth century, the early 1920s, and the 1990s, the relationship between Kabardians and Balkars nearly broke down. In each of these periods there was a general understanding among Russian officials that the continuation of the close relationship between Kabardians and Balkars would be—in

⁶ On the state as referee, see *ibid.*, 74-75.

terms of administering the region effectively, maintaining peace and stability, and promoting economic growth—in the state’s best interest.

That said, the state was not a puppet master in these inter-communal disputes. In addition to state policies, long-term patterns of inter-communal contact also influenced inter-communal peace and conflict in the region. Given the historic Kabardian-Balkar symbiosis (based on economic, political, social, and familial ties), the motivations and initiatives for inter-communal accord often came from within local elites and the societies on which they depended for support. Indeed, the attitudes of ordinary Kabardians, Balkars, and Russians have been key factors in the preservation of Kabardino-Balkaria as multiethnic republic. As chapter six demonstrates, among the communities of Kabardino-Balkaria there was little socio-economic basis for separatism and the efforts of ethno-political entrepreneurs often met with popular indifference.

This lack of a socio-economic basis for separatism underscores the importance of modernization as a factor influencing inter-communal conflict over the twentieth century. As chapter six demonstrates, Kabardian and Balkar ethno-political entrepreneurs were unsuccessful in sustaining their mobilizations and convincing their co-ethnics to take up arms for the creation of separate national territories in large measure because of the relative absence of disparities in modernization levels and general socio-economic equality between Kabardians and Balkars. As we have seen, ethnicized violence or at least seemingly intractable ethno-political tensions in Karachai-Cherkesia, North Ossetia’s Prigorodnyi District, and Chechnya were rooted in long-standing social

stratification along communal lines. Kabardino-Balkaria stands in marked contrast to these regions.

During my final dissertation research trip to Russia in 2012, my host family's location in Vol'nyi Aul, a suburb of the Kabardino-Balkar capital, provided the ideal site to observe everyday life in this multiethnic society. A Kabardian-majority village formed of serfs liberated from their anti-Russian feudal lords by General Ermolov in 1825, Vol'nyi Aul became part of the growing city of Nalchik in 1956. Around the time of its incorporation into Nalchik, Vol'yi Aul began to take in significant numbers of Balkar families after their return from exile. Today Kabardians and Balkars live peacefully among each other in Vol'nyi Aul.

While Kabardians and Balkars live together amicably and maintain mutual friendships, there are clear Kabardian and Balkar spheres and there are distinguishing features that mark the two peoples from each other. These spheres are often determined by the historic cultural and economic practices of the two peoples—practices that have peacefully co-existed for centuries. To a greater extent than the local Kabardians, Balkar families brought their traditional cattle-breeding economy to the city. The few men grazing their cows along the grassy Nalchik riverbank in Vol'yi Aul were more likely to be Balkars than Kabardians. Indeed, our neighbor was one of these Balkar men. He would regularly bring me and my Kabardian host family fresh ayran in the mornings, a sour salted yoghurt drink common among Eurasia's Turkic peoples and for which the Balkars are noted locally. The local Balkar elders of Vol'nyi Aul would gather in the

evenings on a particular public bench on Betal Kalmykov Street. Though these Balkar men were friendly and open to discussions and exchanging the standard “*salam aleikum*” with Kabardian passersby, this was clearly a Balkar zone, one of the few in this Kabardian-majority suburb. I would chat with them when I wanted to hear a Balkar take on a particular historical issue or problem. When I asked about the historical fate and current condition of the Balkar people, these Balkar men placed their historical anger on Lavrenti Beria, Stalin’s security chief who organized the deportation of the Balkars during World War Two. When I asked about the political relationship between Kabardians and Balkars, they replied ironically, with a sentiment perhaps more commonly associated with the feelings of Ukrainians and Georgians toward Russia, that like most small peoples the Balkars had the great fortune of being blessed with a larger neighbor to protect them and with whom they had to live in peace whether they liked it or not.

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